

Sight and Sound



'Pulp Fiction':

**Tarantino gives his
shot-by-shot rap**

'Fear of a Black Hat':

film, hip-hop and pain

Staging eroticism:

**Angus McBean's
photography**

**Korean cinema's
new wave**

Gillies MacKinnon

celebrates Kurosawa

Len Deighton on the

James Bond man

**Kenneth
Branagh's**

Frankenstein

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Congratulates Past and Present Students

Aásaf Ainapore Director/Screenplay	<i>Bruised Fruit (U.K.)</i>
Martin Bray Photography	<i>Laws of Mortal Danger (U.K.)</i>
Alex Claus Director	<i>Pink Ego Situation (U.K.)</i>
Martine Coucke Co-Producer	<i>Thin Ice (U.K.)</i>
Fiona Cunningham Reid Director/Co-Screenplay	<i>Thin Ice (U.K.)</i>
Gabriela Enis Editor	<i>A Sort of Homecoming (Ireland)</i>
Eduardo Guedes Director	<i>Pax (Portugal)</i>
Sean Hinds Director/Screenplay	<i>The Pan Loaf (U.K.)</i>
Roger Pratt Photography	<i>Mary Shelly's Frankenstein (U.K.)</i>
David Scott Photography	<i>Traffic Island (U.K.)</i>
Rodney Sims Editor	<i>Thin Ice (U.K.)</i>

On the selection of their films for the

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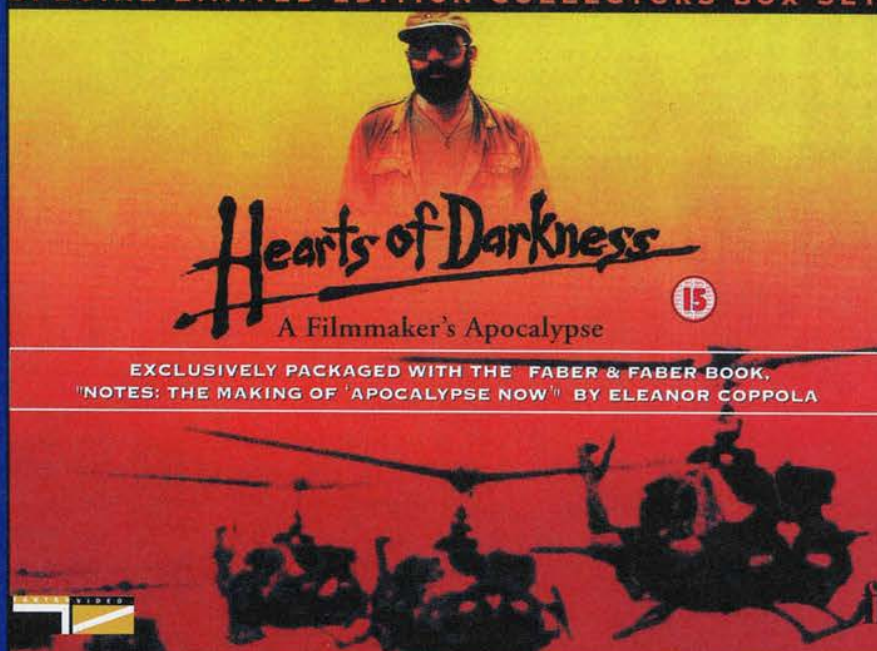
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Prodigal returns

Contributors to this issue

Jonathan Coe's most recent novel is *What a Carve Up!*

Manohla Dargis is a Los Angeles-based film critic
Len Deighton's most recent novel is *Faith*

Edward George is a writer and soundtrack co-conspirator with Black Audio Film Collective

Verina Glaessner is a freelance critic

Stuart Hall has published widely in the field of cultural studies

Jim Hillier is the author of *New Hollywood*

Mark Kermode's work on horror cinema has appeared in many magazines

Pat Kirkham has published numerous books on design and is presently working on a study of Saul Bass

Alison Light is working with Raphael Samuel on a book about British theatre between the wars

Simon Louvish's latest book is *It's a Gift*, one of the BFI Film Classics

Gillies MacKinnon's film *A Simple Twist of Fate* will be released in Britain next year

Geoffrey Macnab is the author of a recent book on Rank Studios

Rona Munro recently completed two Screen Two scripts and is working on a *Film on Four* script

Tony Rayns is the curator of the forthcoming Korean cinema season at the ICA

Commentators have been hesitant to predict too great a future for British cinema on the world stage, ever since Colin Welland's famously premature Oscar night declaration in the early 80s that "the British are coming." However, after a decade of false starts, brilliant flashes in the pan and overall resignation to forever believing that 'small is beautiful', two pieces of recent news have again stirred speculation that the British film industry might be on the upswing.

One is the announcement that an investment group headed by British expatriate film-makers Ridley and Tony Scott is to acquire Shepperton Studios at an estimated cost of £12 million. The Scott brothers have declared their intention to attract international film-makers to the studio, and also vow to support the British film community's attempts to improve the legislative environment for film-making in Britain. This news comes at a time when Shepperton is already on something of a roll, with its revenues on the increase, two new stages built over the last year and decent-budget productions – *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and the Danny Cannon sci-fi *Judge Dredd* – shooting there.

The other piece of news is that as a result of the phenomenal success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the film's star Hugh Grant has signed a two-year production deal with US studio Castle Rock, which will allow him to continue to work in Britain. Grant has formed his own British-based company Simian Films, to develop feature projects he will produce and possibly appear in. This is a rare example of an actor setting up such a company outside the US, and its most encouraging aspect is Grant's stated intention to open up new film avenues for British theatre and TV writers such as Richard Curtis, who wrote *Blackadder* as well as *Four Weddings*.

On the one hand, it is easy (and perhaps not unreasonable) to be less than ecstatic about such news – see "The business" pages overleaf for one such response. After all, both the Scotts at Shepperton and Hugh Grant in London will effectively be working for Hollywood – only in Britain. It may be that Hollywood no longer needs to suck the talent directly to California, but can

leave it in 'regional' outposts such as London where individuals will toil most productively for the metropolitan centre. In the short term, for instance, it is likely that Shepperton will continue primarily to service Hollywood, providing the skills that have distinguished films such as *Frankenstein*.

On the other hand, even after one has shown reasonable scepticism, there is still a feeling of excitement – since the initiatives may mean that British cinema can begin to think in other than small-scale terms. For the last decade British cinema's most consistent achievement, as this magazine has argued, has been its ability to turn out small-scale projects, often made against the odds and not even necessarily with a cinema release primarily in mind – an exemplary case being Stephen Frears' internationally acclaimed *The Snapper*, originally made for BBC television.

But at a time when the average budget of a British feature film has further declined, it is reasonable to hope that Grant's and the Scotts' announcements may herald a reversal of fortune. Of course, there is always the danger that what lies ahead is a new generation of British features cloned from a Hollywood template. But there is also the possibility that British film-makers may over a period of time be able to find budgets to match their imaginations. It is probably a fantasy to imagine British screenwriters, directors and craft talent regularly making prestige-budget British films in Britain. But as the winter nights draw in, it's a comforting possibility.

Postscript

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on cinema distribution, released on the day we go to press, has confirmed the existence of a "complex monopoly" in the UK favouring the "vertically integrated" US studios, which have cinema chains dedicated to distributing their films. While we shall discuss the state of film distribution in future issues, it is worth recording that the release of the MMC's report dashes any hope we may have had that a proportion of the profits of this "complex monopoly" would be ploughed into UK film production. The majors must be smiling.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Meryl! Just a mo sweetheart, bonehead Sylvester's on line 3 (CLICK) Sly babe, I've got po-faced Meryl on 2 and that idiot Jerry coming through on line 1 (CLICK) Yo Jerry! Can't talk, I've got bruise-easy egos on all available lines... Meryl? Whoops it's you! Damn buttons!'

The business

● Let's just think for a moment about the Scott brothers buying Shepperton. Or rather, in the best tradition of this column, let's play Hunt the Hidden Agenda. Of course, the movie business' notable commitment to freedom of information when it comes to big-bucks deals may mean that all has been revealed by the time this issue of *Sight and Sound* hits the newsstands. But let's just assume for a moment it hasn't – and, while we're at it, let's stop saying 'Let's...'.

Running a studio is a swings-and-roundabouts affair, and Ridley Scott's statement to the press when the deal was announced – that he dreamed of pulling in three big-budget movies a year and filling the rest of his booking sheet by servicing the advertising industry – was little more than a statement of the basics of studio economics in the 90s.

It doesn't always happen, of course. Mr Busy went to Shepperton once in the mid-80s to be shown the sets for Rob Reiner's *The Princess Bride*. He was also shown the large empty space where Tina Turner would soon shoot a Pepsi commercial. Mr B's next visit was to welcome the establishment of a major new British production company, headed by Simon MacCorkindale and Susan George. A half-way decent film called *Stealing Heaven* came out of that, followed by something called *That Summer of White Roses*. Perhaps the correspondence columns of the December issue will reveal subsequent developments.

My point is that it's hard enough to set up a film, but to set up a permanently staffed factory on the basis of promised productions is well-nigh impossible – which is why Pinewood, Shepperton's major rival, went from being a full-service operation to a superior rent-a-space site at the turn of the decade. It's also why one of the oldest and most beautiful studios in Europe – La Victorine, just outside Nice – collapsed when David Lean died, thus cancelling a nine-month contract for *Nostromo*. You can insure against cancellation, but you can't insure against the extra investments you have made to bring in a big production or for the loss of all the other, less prestigious projects you turned down to accommodate it.

Which leads Mr Busy to suspect that the Scotts – who are, after all, first and foremost working film directors – may have something else in mind other than trading in their LA lifestyles for a nine-to-five commute to the end of the Waterloo-via-Wimbledon branchline. First thought must be that, whatever they paid for it – somewhere between £10 and £15 million – they didn't get the money out of their own piggy-banks. You only make that kind of money directing movies if you're very



Shepperton: new owners

lucky (as, for example, Bob Zemeckis was by deferring fees on *Forrest Gump* for a big slice of the eventual gross). And neither brother has had a box-office smash in the 90s. Ridley's 1492 was close to a disaster commercially; Tony's *Days of Thunder* certainly wasn't *Top Gun II*, and his two other films this decade – *The Last Boy Scout* and *True Romance* – set no box-office records either. Add to this the fact that a much-touted deal between the brothers and 20th Century-Fox seemed, at the time of writing, to be falling apart after the cancellation of its first big film, *Crisis in the Hot Zone*, and you have a couple of name directors whose business ambitions have been temporarily thwarted.

What this leaves is a financial alliance – between the Scott brothers and the huge Italian publishing group RCS (short for Rizzoli Corriere della Sera, after its flagship Milan publication) – with nothing immediate to put its money into. RCS has expanded its movie interests hugely in the past half-decade, both through propping up Mario Kassar's ailing Carolco (the company behind such movies as *Total Recall*, *Basic Instinct* and *Cliffhanger*) and by acquiring UK-based Majestic Films, the production-packager and sales outfit which hit the jackpot with *Dances With Wolves*.

Majestic was also a part of the RCS/Scott/Fox deal. So what we could be witnessing is the birth of the first integrated production set-up in the UK since Elstree was shut down and Rank pulled out of production at Pinewood. As the backers of Berlin's Studio Babelsberg (featured in this column in April) have discovered, setting up a studio without some kind of guaranteed throughput is a risk not worth taking unless you have government money behind you. For a production company to be able to provide the facilities for your own films is, by contrast, quite a boon.

Of course, Italian media conglomerates have done some pretty foolish things in the past decade, as witness Penta's attempts to break into production in Hollywood. So perhaps the Scotts really have got tired of life in the fast lane and are going for the branchline option after all. But I don't think so.

Mr Busy likes to keep readers up to speed on the latest developments on stories featured in this column, so here goes with a couple of updates.

The first has to do with the ingenious use of a stock-exchange flotation to finance an Australian movie called 'Lightning Jack' (S&S August), starring Paul Hogan. "If only we could get something like that going here," I pontificated. What eventually happened reflects why I am sitting here writing a column called 'The business' while others are out there doing it.

'Lightning Jack' opened pretty well in Australia, but more or less everywhere else it lived up to its name, passing speedily through movie theatres on its way to the video shelves. So while 'Crocodile Dundee' returned a 1,000 per cent profit to its lucky investors, Lightning Jack Film Trust closed its first year of operation with a loss of A\$11.4 million (£5.4 million).

Of course, that only takes into account the first four months of the film's career, and the Hogan comedy Western looks like being a fair success on video. But I'd say that anyone trying to launch a movie through a public flotation in Oz over the next few years is going to have a pretty hard time of it. And, to all you millionaire investors who regard this column as the Standard and Poor's of the movie business, Mr Busy can only say "Oops!"

● Update number two. Remember that curious little story about Roger Corman and Bernd Eichinger making a cheapo movie based on the Fantastic Four and then shelving it (S&S June)? Well, the plan – Eichinger made the Z feature so as to hold on to the rights and make the A feature – seems to have worked.

Production is due to start some time early next year on a big-budget version of the comic strip, to be directed at Fox by Chris Columbus, who after the two *Home Alone* movies and *Mrs Doubtfire* is the most successful film director of the 90s. According to that estimable publication *Daily Variety*, Eichinger hasn't decided what to do with the shelved version, which he describes as "cute".

You may have thought the business end of the movies was tough, taking no hostages in its endless crusade for more profitable pictures. If so, try American television.

Last year New World Entertainment hired the almost legendary Barbara Corday, creator of 'Cagney & Lacey' and one of the most respected television production executives in North America, to head up its expanding TV production operation. Now, Mr Busy finds it hard to wax lyrical about 'Valley of the Dolls', the first big show Corday greenlighted after arriving at New World, but since 'Cagney & Lacey' virtually redefined cop shows on television, he was prepared to give it a go.

Not so Brandon Tartikoff, the equally almost legendary television executive (former supremo of the NBC network, briefly head of Paramount Pictures) whom New World Communications owner Ronald O. Perelman brought in as chairman of the entertainment division – which, to all intents and purposes,

is New World – in June. Within six weeks of Tartikoff's arrival, Corday was leaving, after less than a year with the company. At least in the movie business, when someone goes there is back-slapping talk of a "first-look production deal" (which means that the departing executive has landed a good compensation package) or a "consultancy" (which means that he or she hasn't). When Corday left New World, there was nothing of the sort.

Asked about 'Valley of the Dolls' (starring Sally Kirkland), Tartikoff responded tersely, "If there is a future for that series, it will be on cable."

● Here, at last, is proof positive that your average film-maker's habit of hanging around in restaurants eating expensive meals is a viable way of doing business.

Having dinner before the final Piazza Grande screening of his Golden Leopard winner *Azghyyn ushtykzyn'azaby* (A Place on the Tricorn) in Locarno last year, Kazakh director Ermek Shinarbaev was table-hopped by a French woman who asked him about his next project – always a safe topic with film directors (unless, of course, they're Krzysztof Kieślowski). The woman turned out to be Romaine Legargeant of Paris-based production company ACC, and the result of the



Franco-Kazakh co-production: 'Coeur fragile'

conversation was a Franco-Kazakh co-production called *Coeur fragile*, on which work began two months later and which had its world premiere at the San Sebastián Film Festival in September.

The film stars Natalia Arinbasarova, who made her screen debut as the beautiful 18-year-old in Andrei Konchalovsky's *Perviy uchitel* (The First Teacher) in 1965, and tells the story of the elegiac love affair between a 50-year-old dancer and a 25-year-old admirer.

Where Hugh Grant goes, who shall not follow? But you have to admit that British actor Pete Postlethwaite – who played the violent father in 'Distant Voices, Still Lives' and the eponymous dad of 'In the Name of the Father' – would not have been your first choice of actor for international stardom.

Well, perhaps stardom is the wrong word. But Postlethwaite, whose pre-'Father' career was mainly on the British stage and on television (he made a memorable appearance on 'Casualty' last season as a terminally ill traveller), has just finished two Hollywood movies. This summer he was off somewhere in

MOSCOW NOTES

Sticks and carrots

"Living standards? What do the majority of Russians know about living standards? For years they've been told it's enough to be Soviet. Stick and carrot? What they understand is the whip!" The speaker is 25 and a currency dealer. Banking, it swiftly transpires, is the only game in town. It is not cinemas that inhabit the most vulgarly refurbished of Moscow's mansions, but banks.

It strikes me later that Moscow has all the appearance of an occupied city. Its scurrying figures recall Italian artist Boccioni's more pessimistic early twentieth-century urban scenes. The life that began to creep messily into the streets some seven years ago has vanished. Today over-muscled Stallone clones hold sway instead.

But the dark ages have not yet arrived. There are plays by the excellent Liudmila Petrushevskaya and Vladimir Voinovich, by Genet and Goldoni and Goldsmith. Russian films have crept back into the cinemas, though most are viewed in pirated versions purchased from kiosks that offer Disney, Hollywood old and new as well as Russian and European films. Two or three cinemas mount regular repertory programmes and television has a slot devoted to the byways of European film – this week it is Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen*. There is a sense – as in the commemorative exhibition devoted to the life and music of 60s protest singer and star of Kira Muratova's *Brief Encounters*, Vysotsky – of life behind closed doors.

Aleksei Rodionov, the cinematographer responsible for the haunting camerawork on Sally Potter's *Orlando*, says things are far from easy: "It's impossible to work in Moscow, and St Petersburg is even worse than it was a few years ago." *Orlando* was not a success in Moscow, perhaps because of the difference between British and Russian attitudes to history: we live paralysed by fear of its loss; they suffer its hot breath on their necks. Rodionov has been filming with Vladimir Khotinenko. *Makarov*, Khotinenko's last film, was in the Cannes market and garnered a positive *Variety* review from Karlovy Vary. It is currently showing in Moscow. His new film, provisionally entitled *The Muslim*, is about an Afghan veteran who converts to the Moslem faith and once back in his own village finds himself confronted by his former commander.

Eastern Europe making the part-animated, part-live-action sword and sorcery picture 'Dragonheart' with Sean Connery, Dennis Quaid, Julie Christie and David Thewlis. And before that he was in California working with former Sundance winner Bryan Singer ('Public Access') on an offbeat crime thriller called 'The Usual Suspects'.

In the latter, he plays a character called Kobayashi, who was originally planned (you've guessed it) to be Japanese. But, as they say in all the best sets of press notes, when Pete started to read, Bryan knew he had his Kobayashi...

Ordered to make the sign of the cross or die, he refuses and is shot.

The Muslim has a budget of around \$300,000 – a sign that the state is once more funding film-making. Kaidanovsky, whose films of the 80s had a dark, surreal edge, found his new project delayed as a result of the shooting of his oil-industry sponsor, but now Roskino and some European money have saved the day. Aleksei German, meanwhile, whose *My Friend Ivan Lapshin* epitomised the moment of perestroika, remains locked into the production of a film he is cheerfully unwilling to complete, despite the awkward and inevitable ageing of his erstwhile juvenile lead.

There is a frequent sense of slippage. It is not just that Roskino has mutated into Goskino, or that Radio Moscow, beamed abroad, intersperses its folkloric propaganda with puffs for sophisticated military hardware. There is also a resurrection of institutions whose demise might not have been regretted – for instance Sovexport, now back with state funding. Plans for the Moscow Film Festival following the death of its director Yuri Khodaev look like transforming it into a "festival for East Europe" – in other words, making it redundant.

Naum Kleiman, Eisenstein scholar and head of the State Film Archive, holds the fort in his office in the Kinocentre, an institution itself torn between old state interests and new 'commercial' ones. There not so long ago the strange and hopeful happenings of the perestroika-era Moscow Film Festival took place, and representatives of a new democratic Russia arrived hot-foot from the Kremlin with news of the Baltic States' possible secession from the Soviet Union: a reminder of the inextricable links between politics and the arts.

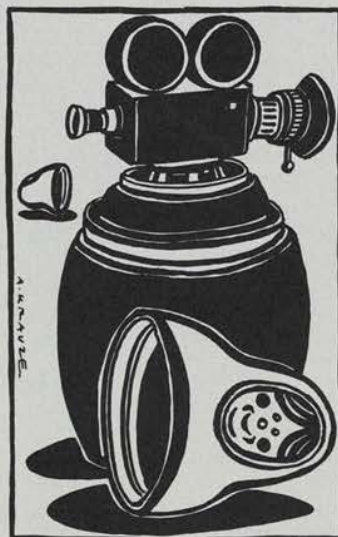
Today, Kleiman welcomes co-operation from cultural bodies abroad, as happened for the forthcoming publication in Russian of Bazin on Renoir to accompany a retrospective of that director's work. The Fellini retrospective will move on to Tokyo after Moscow. "That is what is so important," Kleiman proclaims, "to be part of the world, not to live in a zoo." He is keen on Tadjik cinema old and new, which was featured at the recent festival at Sochi.

Work is also afoot on newly discovered agitki made during the First World

● Forget the box office: the fast-food business is where the really big movie battles are fought. And, as those nice folks at Burger King say, you've got it – "it" being the tie-in marketing for next summer's big Disney film *Pocahontas* (due for release in June 1995).

Burger King brought home the bacon very nicely on this summer's *The Lion King*, on which it spent some \$20 million in tie-in advertising. For *Pocahontas*, the figure is expected to be closer to \$25 million.

All of which leaves McDonald's –



War and on early Russian comedy. "Gradually," says Kleiman, "even Krasnogorsk [the secret state repository for documentary film] is beginning to act more professionally." But the repercussions of the dismantling of the empire are being felt, with the Ukraine at one point demanding the "return" of all of Dovzhenko's films from the Russian Film Museum.

Posters for a presentation by Stanislav Govorukhin of his latest polemical documentary on contemporary Russia, *The Great Criminal Revolution*, hang outside the Kinocentre hall. Govorukhin's earlier documentaries proved milestones: *This Is No Way to Live* (1990) became the banner of the democratic movement; *The Russia We Have Lost* (1992) spliced together archive photographs of pre-Revolutionary Russia and shots of a degradation the director went out of his way to label Soviet.

Not everyone takes Govorukhin, a former director of family entertainment films and now a Duma member, at his word. "For some of us, the Great Criminal Revolution didn't happen with the fall of the Soviet Union but in 1917," remarks Evgeny Tsymlal, director of the prize-winning *Defence Counsel Sedov*. Since his first feature some years ago, Tsymlal has nursed two projects, one an adaptation of a Solzhenitsyn story, the other the tale of a Russian émigré to Paris, *The Spectre of Alexander Wolf*. Neither

which got into hot fat with former Disney chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg over a cut-price video promotion – casting around for a few other movie McNuggets with which to tie in. *Batman Forever* and Steven Spielberg's upcoming production of *Casper* look to be Big Mac's most likely targets.

It's not Mr Busy's practice to draw lawyers' attention to potential money-earners, since they are usually quite good at finding such things for themselves. But given the amount of money the profession has been making recently out of George Michael-related

has attracted the necessary funding.

Govorukhin's *The Great Criminal Revolution* uses documentary footage from various sections of the Ministry for Internal Affairs interlarded with scenes of the director's own encounters across Russia. The central motif is theft: on a literal level, from the acts of small-time criminals to large-scale organised crime, and on a metaphoric level – the theft of Russia's future, her identity and soul. Trade becomes merely the legitimised arm of crime; Govorukhin sits with illiterate child thieves and pursues fleeing grandmothers eking a living from such ill-gotten gains as they can accumulate.

Govorukhin addresses the camera directly in a level, confidential and inescapably flattering tone. His accusations concerning the theft of strategic materials have recently been validated by the discoveries of quantities of smuggled uranium. But his argument is delivered in the all-too-familiar tones of populist hysteria. The only surprise is that the finger of blame is pointed not at the west (though in conversation he is happy to oblige) but at the reformers and the president. "Those who steal live well, those who serve foreigners live well... We are not talking about Panama... about a small island..."

Elem Klimov is also concerned with the sea-change in Russia's affairs. With his work a thorn in the side of the old regime and his last two films made on the eve of glasnost almost a decade ago, Klimov has over the last few years inhabited a kind of limbo. There were projects begun and halted, sometimes for budgetary reasons, especially his projected film of *The Master and Margarita*. He now has new projects lined up – 12 episodes for television on the Olympic Games and, of course, the Tarkovsky museum: not, he hastens to assure me, a museum behind closed doors, but "a place of work". His aim is to make his own exploration of cinema, but this has not been possible. "Russian culture survives strangely. I went to Vienna and it seemed like a little Moscow, there were so many Russians there... But no one can understand how a huge country which has everything, including brains and talented people, has to go about and ask for money and cannot organise its own life."

Verina Glaessner (with thanks to V. Tupikin)

activities, M'learned friends might like to scan the 'Hollywood Reporter' for its account of the latest developments in Mr M's tussle with Sony over creative freedom and the right to withhold his body.

In what must surely rank as one of the great typos of our time, the second letter in the word 'suit' – as in "Mr Michael's ongoing suit against Sony" – somehow got replaced by the second letter in the name of the group in which Mr Michael used to sing before he became creative. M'learned friends may feel this falls somewhat outside the normal definition of fair comment.

LOOK OF PAIN

There are essentially three different stages of make-up for Frankenstein's creature, each involving changing coloration and scar tissue, the loss of stitches and so on. The whole transformation is a healing process. This picture shows a late stage one, at which point the creature is just beginning to heal, and you can see that some of the stitches are starting to fall out. Over the course of the movie, he does heal completely – the stitches disappear and he develops scarring. The main prosthetic is a one-piece latex mould which goes from the line of the scar below the right eye, over the head, and then over the forehead and down the left-hand side of the

neck, including the ear. There's also a central 'V' section which sits on the neck and goes up to the scar below the left eye. In addition, there's a lower- and upper-lip piece, and of course the entire nose. Although people generally assume that the latex appliances are joined along the scar lines, this is not the case since all the stitches have to be put in individually, and to redo them each time would take hours. There are also stitches on the teeth, of which I'm very proud. Usually false teeth distort speech, so to avoid that we covered just the front of the teeth with a prosthetic. You can also see very clearly that the right corner of the mouth is distorted, which we achieved through the use of a hook

which sits inside the mouth. The hook swings on a little bearing and moves up and down by means of a spring, so the lip moves naturally. The hook was one of my first ideas, so when I initially did a life-cast of De Niro in New York, I did it with a set of false teeth with a hook incorporated. I thought it was crucial because it makes the mouth lopsided and because the scar running through the mouth looks so painful. It is a good way of visualising the creature's pain. It was important that it should look like De Niro: even his mole is still present. That was a crucial part of my job: you have one of the most famous screen actors in the world here, and it would have been a terrible waste to lose that.

DANIEL PARKER: THE MAKE-UP



HEALING PROCESS

This is a scene of the creature at the peasants' hut. What's happening here is that he's looking at the children having fun, and it's the first time we see him as a sympathetic character. As far as the make-up is concerned, he's very dirty at this stage, but he's also more healed. A lot of the strong reds have gone from his skin, as have a few more of the stitches. You can see how we distorted the left eye, and you can also see a little of the lip distortions. All this was done to create a lopsidedness – he is ugly, but it needs to look natural. There's a very strict logic: the scar is running through the mouth, so it has lifted the lip on the right-hand side, where it has been badly sewn. I'm a stickler for detail and it was great working with De Niro, because he's the same. He once turned to me and said, "There's something a little bit wrong with the right eyebrow", which was based on his own eyebrow. He said, "There's one hair missing, Daniel," and he was right. But what really annoyed me was that I knew which hair he was talking about, and he beat me to it.



MAKING FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER

The make-up artist and set designer on the look of Kenneth Branagh's film

SOFT MECHANICS

What you have here is not De Niro, but a dummy. But you could seriously have laid De Niro and the dummy side by side and not been able to tell the difference. Every part of the skeleton inside the dummy moved anatomically correctly: from the two bones in the forearm, to the wrists, the legs, the ankles. It was also artificially weighted to reproduce human form. The reason we went to all that trouble was because it gave Kenneth Branagh the opportunity to use the dummy for whatever he wanted. For instance in one scene, it has to lie across some crates, and it needs to flop and fall correctly. I've never seen a dummy that moved so well. This picture also shows the left arm, which provided us with a very particular challenge. Since the monster has been created from mismatched body parts, I wanted one of the arms to be longer and more muscular than the other. In the past, we've seen prosthetics such as those used in Ridley Scott's *'Legend'*, in which Tim Curry appears as the devil with a great big beast's muscles. In stills they look great, but they don't move, so on film they look like lumps of rubber. I wanted to have a muscle system under the prosthetic that was independent of the prosthetic and worked with De Niro's muscles. We started out using hard mechanics, but that was horrible so we chucked them out. Then we experimented with what I call 'soft mechanics': making up muscles that were stuck on top of De Niro's own muscles, and making up bones to extend his arm. We made the new muscles using different densities of foam latex, depending on where we wanted them to go and what we wanted them to do. They were applied directly to De Niro's arm, then the prosthetic skin was slipped over them. So what we ended up with was a prosthetic skin floating on top of this muscle structure, giving the appearance of muscle movement under the skin. While most of the creature's body hair is dark, the hair on this arm (which comes from someone else) is fair. On film you don't notice a lot of this, it becomes almost subliminal, but all these details serve to show that this is not one man.



DEFORMITY OF THE EYE

This is the scene in which the creature interacts with the blind man, and the make-up is a late stage two, so again he's a lot more healed. I like this scene, because though we have watched this tormented character slowly learning a language and starting to understand what's going on, we haven't yet seen him receiving affection. In his blindness, this man doesn't see that the creature is 'ugly', but simply knows he is a good man. Then he reaches out and touches the creature's face, and says: "You poor man, what have they done to you?" Touching the make-up doesn't do it any harm. My own approach is to achieve the maximum by putting on the minimum, whether with make-up or prosthetics. The pieces are incredibly thin; it's not like putting your fingers into a foam-rubber sponge. This way, we've been able to keep De Niro's features and avoid that problem [evidenced in *'The Hunger'*] of creating an enormously enlarged head. Because the pieces are so thin, they react to touch in much the same way as skin would. Richard Briers was fascinated by this – I don't think he'd come across anything like it. You can also see the eye deformity more clearly – for this I developed something which to my knowledge has never been done before. I originally wanted to use a scleral or haptic contact lens, which is a hard lens which covers the whole of the eye. I had intended to put ridges on the outside to distort the eye, but even without the ridges, De Niro was unhappy. So I went for a soft contact lens, which is normally about 12 mm across, covering only the cornea. But instead I enlisted my optical man, Richard Glass, to make me a 22 mm soft lens to cover most of the eye. This was extremely experimental. In the end we managed to construct a 20 mm soft lens which enabled me to create a yellowing of the white of the eye, of the sclera. I then used prosthetics to distort the eye itself, although we had to take great care not to allow the prosthetic to press uncomfortably on the lens.



Make-up artist Daniel Parker talks to Mark Kermode

Of all the screen monsters inspired by Mary Shelley's legendary Gothic novel, it is Boris Karloff, clad in make-up artist Jack Pierce's square-headed, bolt-necked apparatus, who stands out as the iconic screen image of Frankenstein's creature. Ever since James Whale's ground-breaking movie first sent audiences running screaming from cinemas in 1931, each new screen embodiment of Frankenstein's beleaguered creation has been judged in comparison with Pierce's unforgettably monstrous vision.

Daniel Parker, son of acclaimed movie make-up artist Charles Parker and creator of the creature for Kenneth Branagh's new *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, was born in the early 60s, soon after foam latex had begun to revolutionise his father's craft. As this material increasingly enabled the creation of more and more detailed prosthetics (defined as any structure, from a latex mole to a false arm, which adds to the body), the division between 'make-up artists' and 'prosthetics artists' would become increasingly blurred. In the 70s, Oscar winner Dick Smith (who earned notoriety for his 'possession' designs on William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*) pushed back the boundaries of 'make-up' with his extraordinary latex work, developing advanced 'stippling' techniques with which he achieved striking ageing effects on such young actors as Max Von Sydow (*The Exorcist*) and Dustin Hoffman (*Little Big Man*). Smith was assisted in his most radical work by budding apprentice Rick Baker, who in the 80s would fuse latex prosthetics and mechanical effects to create the skin-stretching, bone-crunching transformation of *An American Werewolf in London*, dissolving forever the distinction between prosthetic and make-up techniques, much as Rob Bottin's audacious creature-effects for John Carpenter's *The Thing* transgressed the boundaries between make-up and special effects.

Throughout this intense period of change, foam latex has remained a stable element (even if in increasingly refined and ever more malleable forms), providing in the 90s the basis of the extraordinarily detailed body transformation effects of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. "As recently as the early 80s, you couldn't build foam latex appliances more than one inch thick," Daniel Parker remembers. "But now, by adding new chemicals, we've developed a more stable material from which we can craft structures up to a foot thick."

Parker's own route into the field of prosthetics was circuitous. Advised

by his father that make-up was "a dead-end job", he signed up as a runner for Fox at the age of 18, before enlisting for *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, where he worked alongside one of his father's former apprentices, Tom Smith. In 1983 make-up effects man Stuart Freeborn enlisted Parker's aid on *Return of the Jedi*, bringing him into the make-up effects field at a crucial point.

"At that period we were still officially just 'make-up men'," he remembers, "though what we were actually doing was working with what is now called 'animatronics'. Then after Jim Henson's *The Dark Crystal*, everything became more specialised. Now, instead of general 'make-up men', we have teams comprising make-up specialists, mechanical specialists, hair specialists and so on, as well as researchers working with new forms of latex and eurythanes."

It was this departmentalisation which distinguished Animated Extras, the company formed by Parker with animatronics specialist Nik Williams in the late 80s. Rising at around the same time as Bob Keen's renowned Image Animation team (the respected British company responsible for the memorably fleshy creations of *Hellraiser* and *NightBreed*), Animated Extras had its first success in providing the sparse but ghoulish monster effects for the British horror film *Dream Demon*. Parker, meanwhile, kept his toe in the mainstream by creating one-off bullet wounds for films such as *The Sicilian* and *The Crying Game*, and he remains particularly enamoured of his work outside the fantasy/horror genre. "At an early stage I decided that in order to do good prosthetics work I needed to become better at 'straight' make-up," he explains. "I did make-up on many movies including *A Passage to India*, which I found invaluable. I have a lot of respect for that kind of 'invisible' work; it has always annoyed me that *Quest for Fire* beat *Gandhi* to the make-up Oscar in 1982, when the latter featured far superior, if less obvious work."

When approaching the effects for the creature in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Parker was inevitably aware of the shadow cast by Pierce's legendary make-up for Karloff. But instructed by Branagh to create "not a monster, but a man made of other men", he turned not to film history but to medical textbooks and morticians' records to create an image of a body roughly hewn from mismatched body parts.

"One can't ignore the heritage of *Frankenstein*," he admits, "but because of this 'man-made-of-other-men' approach, our design looks nothing like what has gone before." In fact, there is an element of comparison to the ►

◀ heavily scarred make-up created by Phil Leakey for Christopher Lee in Hammer's 1957 hit *The Curse of Frankenstein*, itself created as a reaction to Pierce's work. Since Universal had copyrighted its classic make-up, Leakey had gone out of his way to explore new avenues of creature design, taking him in broadly the same direction as Parker would explore 25 years later.

"I spend a lot of time sculpting, considering the actor's face, and most importantly the way it moves," Parker says. "I try to transfer to the surface all that's happening under the skin. Obviously, the work we've done for *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* is not subtle; people are going to see and be aware of it. But I would like people to come out of the film thinking that Robert De Niro was brilliant, which means the make-up was working as it was intended. I'm sure some people will come out saying 'Oh, I wish it had been more like the Jack Pierce make-up', but at the end of the day, I want the performance to come through."

It is ironic that, at the height of his powers, Parker now finds the craft in which he works under threat of extinction from encroaching computer technology. "Computers will take over," he admits candidly. "At the moment we're working with them, but it will get to a stage where they don't need us any more. Some people think computers will never be able to re-create the physicality of on-set effects, but I think it's naive to say that. Just look at how fast the field has advanced since *T2* or *Jurassic Park*. The fact is, no one knows what will be possible next year."

Set designer Tim Harvey talks to Pat Kirkham

For a story that has been filmed so many times, Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* offers little help to the designer of a movie set: the challenge is to visualise what the novel does not describe rather than re-creating in loving detail the world the author sets forth. The designer for Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Tim Harvey, a trained architect and experienced film and television designer, told me that both he and Branagh were clear that they didn't want the new film to look 'Gothick' and were keen to get away from the *Frankenstein* familiar from other movies and popular imagery, in particular James Whale's 1931 cinema classic. As a result, the Frankenstein family home is a beautiful country house set in pleasant parkland, its 'middle European' domestic vernacular and rust and yellow ochre walls clearly distinguishing it from earlier representations of spooky castles. Even the chapel, designed for a family funeral that ended up on the

cutting-room floor, is light, airy and intimate, its stained glass colourful without being heavy or sombre.

But though Harvey did not "aim at Gothic in the sense of spires, gargoyles or tracery", he acknowledges that he wanted to capture something of the mood that 'Gothick' architecture and design suggest. "I wanted to capture the moody boldness of illustrator Bernie Wrightson, who seems to look with a cinematographic eye." The town of Ingolstadt, where Frankenstein goes to study and has his laboratory, is much more horrific in the film than in the novel – "seeping with disease" is how Harvey describes it. The contrast with the attractive domestic atmosphere of the Frankenstein family home is deliberate, suggesting "the more murky areas of the mind into which Frankenstein is moving".

But the film, like the novel, also addresses the lighter side of life, and sets have been designed so that, with appropriate lighting, camera angles and arrangements of objects, they can evoke both light and dark moods. The multi-purpose hall-cum-ballroom in the Frankenstein home, for instance, can sometimes look extremely stark and severe but at others glows with warmth.

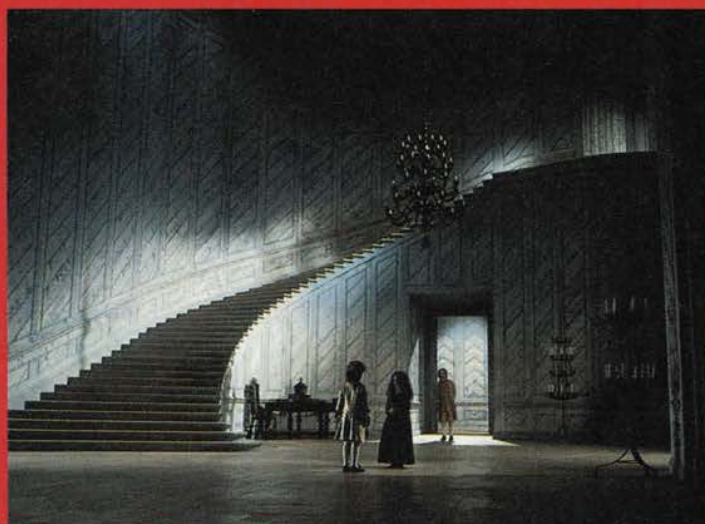
In order to achieve the tight control they wanted, Branagh and Harvey decided against virtually any location shooting. Seven large stages on the back lot of Shepperton Studios were used, and even then there was spillover on to adjoining land. It took three to four months for teams of workmen (at times over 100) to recreate the family home, Frankenstein's study and laboratory and parts of a town in 'middle Europe', as well as an Arctic landscape complete with a full-scale whaling vessel. The atmosphere must have resembled that of Alfred Junge's creation of a temple in the Himalayas as well as those majestic mountains at Shepperton almost 50 years ago for Powell and Pressburger's *Black Narcissus*.

Harvey has worked on all of Branagh's previous films – re-creating the landscapes of France and Tuscany for *Henry V* and *Much Ado About Nothing* respectively – but this was his greatest challenge. The \$40 million budget might not seem enormous by Hollywood blockbuster standards, but Harvey's \$3 million allocation is more than he had ever had before. Such was the size and scale of the sets, however, that budgeting was as tight as ever – for instance, the cobblestones were imported from Portugal (the cheapest available) and then split in half to double the coverage. *'Mary Shelley's Frankenstein'* has a Gala Screening at the London Film Festival on 3 November and is subsequently on general release. The LFF runs until 20 November

TIM HARVEY: THE SET

SIMPLE SEVERITY

The family chapel is at the other end of the same long hall as the staircase. The viewer is outside the chapel, separated from it by an iron grille. Its style is governed by the style of the rest of the building, so once again we didn't go for Gothic. The chapel interior looks a little austere, but the metal grille, which is Spanish and therefore Catholic in feel, added a more obvious touch of religion without going as far as plaster saints. The beautiful harpsichord is a modern reproduction, but in a very simple, almost severe style which goes well with the simple shapes at the staircase end of the room.

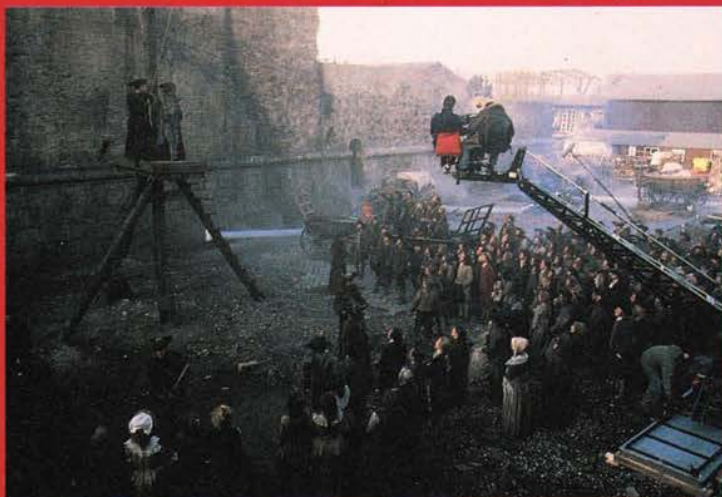


TURNING BLUE

This shows only one end of a very long room, but the image gives an impression of the size of this particular set of the Frankenstein household, which had to change from being a happy home to a much more disturbed place. The hall, or more precisely parts of it, were used for a lot of scenes because with the right lighting, shooting and arrangements of objects, the space could look either warm, airy, light and intimate or cold, severe and threatening. The high blue walls can appear either cool or warm. They are paler at the bottom than the top, the shift in tones giving a soft, well-used look to the more intimate eye-level shots. The diagonal wooden boarding is bold, but I stopped it from being too strong a pattern by painting then scraping it, so some of the wood comes through. The staircase is a striking element; dramatic without being too obvious.

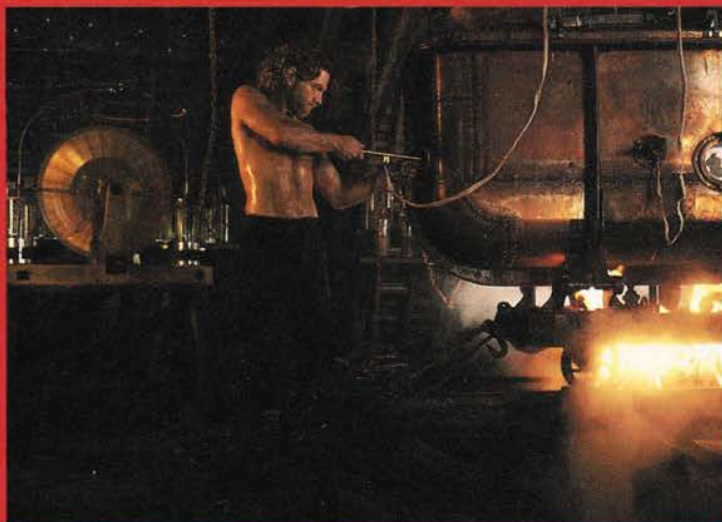
WEAR AND TEAR

This is part of the town, showing the old walls. There is a hanging taking place in the square in front. In the background to the right is the open part of the set (you are not meant to see this). It was going to be a totally enclosed set so you could look anywhere at any time, but in the end we had to do away with an entire fourth wall. In the foreground are the cobbles we brought over from Portugal. This set stood for over three months and there was a lot of wear and tear, lots of running repairs to be done. We also re-hashed parts of it for scenes in other towns. This set had the most resources poured into it, but it was not the most important in terms of screen time.



POWER PLAY

It is just as important to get objects right as it is to produce convincing buildings and interiors. This chair is a powerful statement – a baroque elaboration against a somewhat severe background. I found it at one of the shops which specialises in theatrical props and had it re-upholstered and re-gilded. It is a 'real' chair rather than one made for a play or film – probably a French nineteenth-century baroque revival or reproduction piece rather than a seventeenth-century one. It is wonderfully large and wild, with lots of finials and curlicues and ram's-head scrolls. The effect is rich but odd, attractive but slightly disturbing at the same time.



OBJECTS AND WIRES

We built the attic storey of the house in which Frankenstein worked. This is just one corner of it in a scene towards the end of the 'creation' sequence. The large copper cooking pot is the sarcophagus. It seemed to me that as a poor student, Frankenstein would be using all sorts of domestic items in his laboratory – anything he could lay his hands on. To his left is a Wimshurst wheel – an early generator of electricity. Behind the wheel are lots of insulators. All the objects and wires mean that there is a tremendous amount going on, a wealth of detail. The area set aside as his study is also crammed with things – objects and papers. Frankenstein becomes very frenetic as he becomes engrossed in his work and the last thing he does is tidy up. A lot of the 'realism' comes from the objects. We did lots of research into what he would have had in the laboratory and study.

COLD WORLD

The Arctic set was one of our major creations. On the right is Frankenstein's funeral pyre and on the left is part of the hull of the ship we built – 100 feet long and 23 feet wide. In the back is the cyclorama, the backdrop painted on canvas which has much more detail than shown here; it goes from darkest night to the hues of an Arctic sunrise. I was responsible for providing the 'ice' – not an easy job. We managed reasonably well in the end, mainly using plastic and plaster, with some real ice here and there, but it wasn't entirely satisfactory. For the effect of ice and snow glistening we used lots of salt. The special effects team (under Richard Conway) created the storm which breaks up the ship (one million gallons of water were used); my contribution was to design the ship so that it would break up in a believable fashion.



Rona Munro recalls the compulsion behind writing the screenplay and the experience of watching the completed film. Overleaf, director Ken Loach talks about grief, loss and the craft of film-making to Geoffrey Macnab

LADYBIRD

LADYBIRD

THE WRITER

● The premiere of *Ladybird* was a great night for me. I drank too much champagne too fast and lurched around in a sparkly frock hugging people. I came with a gang of female friends, all of us high on the chance to dress up and liberated by babysitters to get as drunk and emotional as we wanted. We sat in a line in the cinema, and as the film began I reached for my best mate's hand, seeing it again through her eyes, realising again what the fizzy wine had temporarily upstaged, that this was a film about pain and damage and it made some people more than a little upset.

During the writing of *Ladybird*, I couldn't afford to consider what reactions it might provoke. I approached my job with two aims: to represent as closely as I could the emotional truth of 'Maggie', whose story it tells, and to structure the film so that real events worked as a dramatic narrative.

When Ken Loach first approached me to write *Ladybird*, he already knew the bare bones of the story. He first mentioned the idea as we sat in the back of a transit van, lurching around the Midlands in the dark. We were researching a potential drama series for Palace Pictures, which promptly went down the plughole. I didn't have any work at that moment; I was sacked from *Casualty* a few weeks later. My first panicky impulse was to earn something approaching a living somewhere and fast. Ken's project was speculative; he didn't know if it could be a film; he didn't know if it could be funded. In spite of this, I found myself putting 100 per cent of my effort into the idea.

Two things made it irresistible: the chance to work with Ken Loach and the story itself. Working with Ken was an experience I'm only now appreciating; as I start work on my next film, I recognise how much I learned on *Ladybird*. It felt like a true collaboration, and I think for a director to have the kind of generosity and

trust to achieve that with a writer deserves three more glowing paragraphs and some embarrassing excesses of sentimentality. I shall therefore stop now and sum it up in one sentence: working with Ken Loach taught me a lot and I don't know how many other writers have been so lucky with their first script.

The other compulsion came from establishing a relationship with Maggie and Jorge, the couple at the centre of the film. Maggie is the same age as me. She has had nine kids; I had just had my first. She has lost six of her children. I think when I first went to visit them I almost wanted to find some evidence, something that would explain why this had happened to them. As the weeks passed and I got to know them better, I was left with no consolation but the fact of their survival.

Maggie has no problem in talking about her experiences. She loses the thread sometimes as to which court case came when, which piece of bureaucracy deprived her of Sean, which separated Mickey and Serena. Sometimes she would cry as she talked, tears flowing unselfconsciously down her face. Next moment her eldest remaining son would be on her knee and she'd be offering me more cake. A sticky fruit cake was provided for every visit. "Bleeding hell he's got another one, this is for you Rona, we don't have cake every day you know."

Maggie and Jorge wanted their story told. They had no expectations of redress or apology. Maggie wanted some record of her story to show her children if they ever came to find her.

We had to convince Channel 4 that this was the stuff films are made of, a relentlessly harrowing saga of damage. I remember thinking, "Well... I don't know if I'd pay £5 to get this depressed." We went into Channel 4 the morning after the general election. Sally Hibbin, the producer, had her leg in plaster. Both she and Ken had been up all night and no one was celebrating. I'd spent the night on the floor of a tiny room at Hammersmith Hospital (it's a long story). We literally limped into Channel 4 and

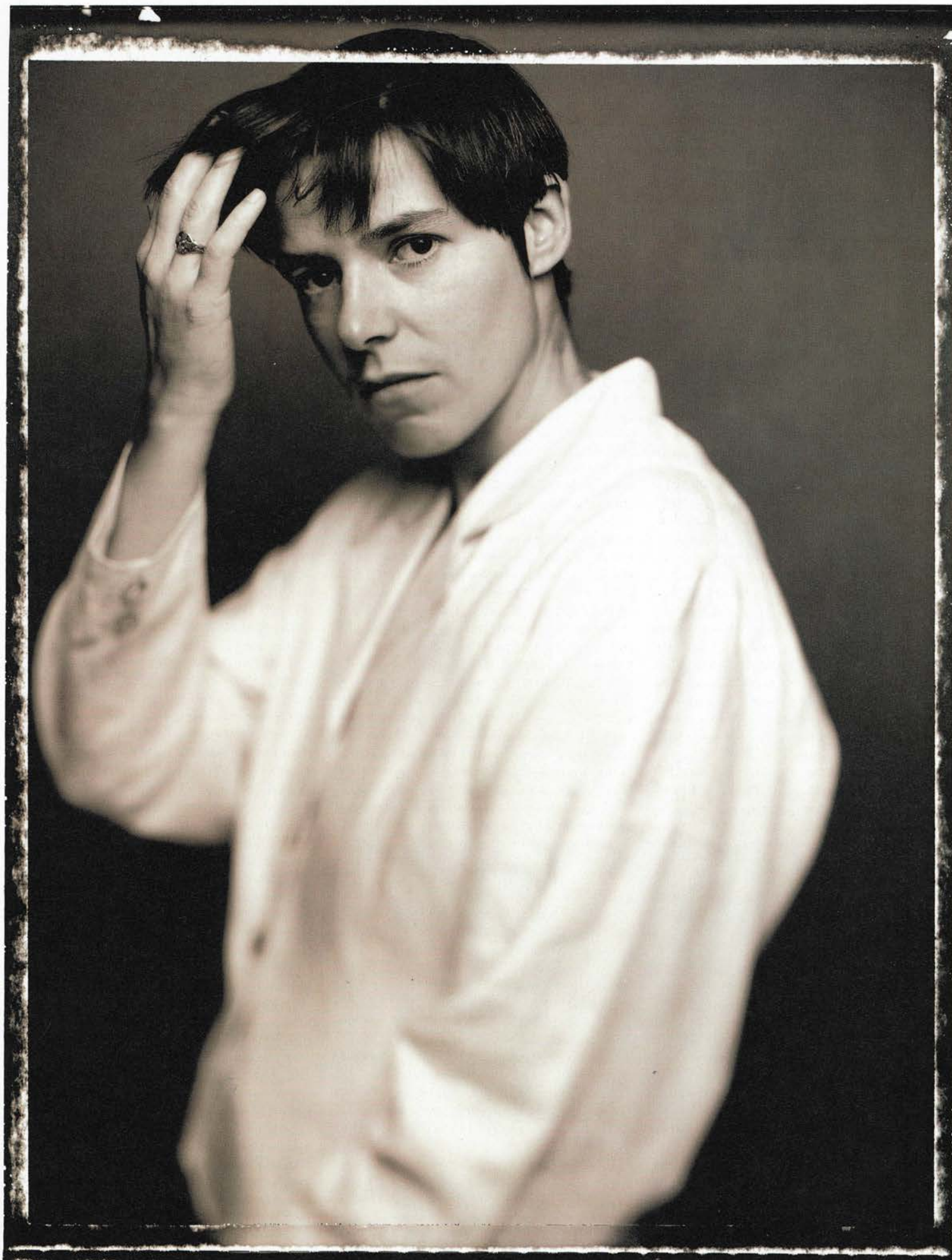
half an hour later limped out again. "Was that a yes?" I asked with bright naivety. "It was a maybe," said Sally grimly.

I don't know if they expected the maybe to become a yes, but I mentally wrote it off. When we got the go-ahead, my first feeling was of relief that I would not now have to write the letter to Maggie and Jorge explaining why their story could never be a film. "Don't expect it to go into cinemas," warned Sally. I didn't.

The process of writing was easy in one sense: the plot already existed and the characters were known. The nightmare was what to tell and how to tell it. Certain moments such as the removal of Maggie's baby from the hospital always seemed essential, but there was a mass of other material leading up to that point. The idea of using flashbacks was my first breakthrough in cracking the structure (I think this was Ken's idea, but I'm going to grab a bit of credit). The only positive element in the story was the strength of Maggie and Jorge's relationship. Also, by the time Maggie and Jorge met she was already damaged, already defensive, and in discovering her through him we could see the more sympathetic woman underneath.

The first drafts of the script played with the idea of seeing Maggie from several different viewpoints. I soon abandoned this to concentrate on seeing the world through her eyes. The story was so extreme and a multiple focus both confused and weakened it. And that was the only major change of emphasis that occurred during the writing of *Ladybird*. Later drafts cut down on how much was shown in flashback, but it always seemed important to show Maggie from an early age, at the start of the damage that damned her. Final drafts involved small alterations, spelling out precise details of scenes. I remember looking at Ken suspiciously as he made another request for some action to be pinned down exactly. "What have you got me doing this for? Everyone tells me the ▶

The world through her eyes: scriptwriter Rona Munro, right; Crissy Rock as 'Maggie', whose story the film relates, top



◀ actors just chuck away the script and improvise." He looked faintly abashed. In fact, I can confirm what they told me beforehand: the method is brilliantly improvisational, but the text re-emerges in the editing.

I can't think of many companies who would have been as accommodating of my circumstances as Parallax was. At that time I was living in Edinburgh and had only three hours a day to work while my son was at the baby-minder. Ken flew up to Edinburgh to fit around my few free hours. Later Parallax rushed me in mini-cabs to collect Danny from nursery. I'd like to think *Ladybird* is also a testament to what even a lone mother can achieve with the minimum of support from her colleagues.

By the time filming started I was living in London but in the process of trying to move out of two flats at different ends of the country and into a third (another long story). I had no doubts that I could have been present at every stage of the filming, and the few days I did manage to attend were worth it for the catering alone. I didn't, having worked in television, expect to be making the kind of input I would in theatrical rehearsals and I'm sure half the crew had no idea who I was. I spent most of my time crouched in corners of the room, avoiding the actors' eyelines and staring at assorted bits of carpet, but the power of the film and of the performances was still thrillingly obvious.

I remember Crissy Rock (Maggie) going upstairs to throw up after she'd eaten sticky cake through 17 takes in Jorge's bedsit. "What's your name again love? Fiona?" she caught my arm. "What do you do then?" I remember watching Vlad (Jorge) merge two pieces of writing in one speech: my script and his own memories of a childhood in Chile. I remember the scene in the hospital. As we moved through the takes, Crissy's grief only seemed more real, more terrifying in its intensity. I sat behind the camera squashed against one of the social workers who advised us, both of us in tears.

One of the best consequences of the openness of the filming was that I got the chance to understand how every part of the process func-

tions, as I was to do later in a different context when I made a studio piece for the BBC and was able to work closely with the director Jean Stewart. I don't think you can read books about writing for the small or large screen. To write any kind of drama you have to understand the other jobs that will help realise your words and you have to watch them working in the context of your own script. I wrote better lines once I had worked with actors and seen scripts change in rehearsal. I'll write better films having seen *Ladybird* and *Men of the Month* from rehearsal to editing. Even if they don't say a word, writers need to be able to watch filming and editing, especially at my early stage. And if directors have the security in their own vision to include them, they'll get better screenplays.

When I saw the first cut of *Ladybird*, I was reminded of something I'd had to push to the back of my mind. Maggie really lived through this. There was her emotion on the screen. I've watched it several times since, but the screening I was most nervous of attending was the early one where Maggie and Jorge came to see what we'd done. I'd given them the script before filming started but after an afternoon of talking, Maggie decided she didn't want to comment further, she was too focused on the harrowing incidents that had to be left out, the behaviour of some individuals that she felt we were portraying too sympathetically. She told me she'd leave it alone. "I'm getting all upset here Rona, you've done a good job, you have." I didn't know if she'd still think so after the screening. She said she did. I knew she meant it.

The other screening I'll always remember is the premiere. Four women came with me, all friends, all part of the writing of that script in the support they give me through every trauma, personal and professional. We linked hands, they cried their eyes out and they made me feel I'd made a film for them, as Maggie did. That means more than a good review ever could. It makes it easier to write the next one. It certainly beats five glasses of champagne, a sparkly dress and a ride home in a Mercedes. *'Ladybird Ladybird' is on general release*

THE DIRECTOR

● There could be no surer sign of Ken Loach's resurgence than the reels of rushes stacked in the editing suite. With more than a month to go until *Ladybird Ladybird's* release, the director was already busy putting the finishing touches to its successor, the Spanish Civil War epic *Land and Freedom*.

In the bad old days of the 80s, such industry would have been unthinkable: features by Loach were few and far between, and certainly didn't overlap. "A giant in the wilderness" was the way he seemed to be characterised in almost every profile of the period. It was indeed the worst of times. His erstwhile collaborator Tony Garnett scarpered to Hollywood, and Loach, left to cope on his own, spent much of the decade wrangling with censors. *Questions of Leadership*, his four documentaries about the trades union movement, was kept off the air by Central; *Which Side Are You On?*, a film about miners' art, was pulled by *The South Bank Show* (it was finally shown on Channel 4); and there was a bitter feud over his theatre production of Jim Allen's *Perdition*, which the Royal Court and most of the broadsheets branded as anti-semitic, and which was pulled off the stage shortly before opening night. The features Loach did manage to complete, *Looks and Smiles* (1981) and *Fatherland* (1986), were among his least distinguished: he himself described them as "lethargic".

To anyone who had the slightest remembrance of *Cathy Come Home* (1966) or *Kes* (1969), it was apparent that Loach was in retreat. He spent as much time defending his films as he did making them, he wryly admitted to the *Observer*. And his sense of weariness was evident in the pictures themselves. Over the years, he pared down his shooting style to basics. Quirky angles, elaborate tracking shots and intrusive zooms were all to be avoided. The camera's primary function was quiet observation. "Authenticity of experience," a phrase he still uses today, was what he sought to capture. Trevor Griffiths famously remarked that "if Loach could shoot without a camera, he would," while his former cinematographer, Chris Menges, noted that the faces in the story were much more important to him "than the background or the costume or the sets". By the 80s, though, Loach's self-effacing technique was becoming repetitive, even mannered.

It can scarcely be said that his approach to film-making has changed since. He still casts non-professional actors and places the same onus on telling "real stories about real people", but he seems to be having more luck with his material. *Hidden Agenda* (1990) marked a change of fortune. Ironically, it was perhaps his least characteristic picture. Not only did it feature two American 'stars', Brad Pitt and Frances McDormand, it was also constructed along the lines of a conventional generic thriller. But the subject matter was explosive: Loach's attempt at tackling the British 'shoot-to-kill' policy in Northern Ireland won him



Only glimpses: Vladimir Vega as Jorge in *'Ladybird Ladybird'*



More than a case history: Crissy Rock as Maggie, a woman at the centre of a storm

a Jury Prize at Cannes and provoked more controversy than any of his 'fictional' work since *Cathy Come Home*. (If irritating Alexander Walker can be judged as a measure of success, this certainly hit the bull's-eye.)

Loach's three subsequent films – *Riff-Raff* (1991), *Raining Stones* (1993) and *Ladybird* – can be seen as a triptych. All shot for roughly the same budget (£700,000-£900,000) for Parallax Pictures, and made under the aegis of Channel 4, they have a rough, improvisatory dynamism that was conspicuously lacking in his work of the 80s. The last, *Ladybird*, is quintessential Loach, a picture that straddles fiction and documentary and comes trailing controversy in its wake. It was inspired by the case history of a woman whose children were taken away from her by social workers. Loach chose to shoot it as 'fiction' on the grounds that this would enable him "to explore the relationships between the people better than if we just did simple documentary". However, the opening credits announce that the film is "Based On A True Story". This little proviso, Loach claims, was issued simply in case viewers decided that the events portrayed were so far-fetched that they must have been made up, but it was enough to revive the hoary old drama-documentary debate that has dogged Loach since *Cathy Come Home*.

Writing in the *Sunday Times*, Carol Sarler accused him of distorting the facts, maligning the social workers involved, and exploiting "a family's unhappiness". Loach is dismissive of the allegations: "It's a kind of horrible tabloid cheapness, of tawdry worth... squalid."

Nevertheless, Sarler's charges highlight the way his work is liable to be received. He is regarded, almost exclusively, as a polemicist: his consummate ability to tell stories in images, to draw arresting performances from untested actors, and his general approach to his craft are all too often overlooked.

Geoffrey Macnab: Where did scriptwriter Rona Munro's influence end and yours begin as far as the structure of the film was concerned?

Ken Loach: We talked about it a bit: what the rough shape would be, and where we would start and where we would finish, and what the central theme should be. Then Rona wrote the script. Then we talked together and worked on it together. Rona wrote the dialogue and Rona wrote the scenes, but if it's a good collaboration, you shouldn't know exactly where one began and the other ended.

Why did you choose to set the film in London?

We wanted a big metropolis so you couldn't say this is about Liverpool social services or anywhere else. London has so many different authorities it can be less specific.

Do you always prefer to shoot in the streets and on location than in a studio?

Yes. I haven't shot in a studio since BBC days, and that was an electronic studio. I can see no virtue in shooting in a studio at all.

Throughout your career you have switched between fiction and documentary, and have sometimes combined both. Is it very different working in one to the other?

No, it's very similar. It's always a question of camera position and lights, really, and how you get the sound. Fiction you have to steer more: you're in control, but you still have to be

on your guard for things that will happen that are good that you haven't predicted. And obviously in documentary the balance is the other way: you can control it much less, but you still have to try and second-guess what's going to happen, if you're going to dash round and get another angle so you can cut those two bits together.

I read somewhere that you said 'Ladybird Ladybird' was a film about grief and loss; about how two people try to cope with the loss of their kids. Do you think there's a danger, in taking that as your central theme, of aestheticising suffering?

What do you mean? Making it pretty? Do you mean it's indulgent? I hope not, in that I tried to express what are very powerful experiences, very elemental emotions, in as direct a way as possible. And not to hold back on them. Apart from observing the people sympathetically, apart from trying to make the film with a sense of rhythm and all the other things that film-making is about, I wouldn't try to make it gratuitously pleasing aesthetically if that meant taking away from the power of what was happening. The priorities were always the authenticity of the experience. Obviously you cut to a certain rhythm, and light in a certain way, but that shouldn't be distracting. Aesthetic is a difficult word for me in this context. The study of beauty... is that what it means?

Would you say that you used more close-ups than in recent films?

It's not that close. I'd never go beyond a head and shoulders. A lot of it is in rooms, so you can't get a looser shot without putting on a rather ugly lens and I don't like wide lens – ▶

◀ it turns people into objects. The size of the rooms dictates the size of the shots.

In 'Riff-Raff' and 'Raining Stones', there are strong elements of comedy. Did you feel that for this material, comedy would be wholly inappropriate?

There are moments of comedy. She does make you smile. I mean, she has a way with words. More self-conscious comedy would have been out of place. I don't think it was something we took a judgment about early on. It's the way the story unravels.

How did you go about finding Crissy Rock for Maggie?

We auditioned a lot of people – it must have been 200-300 – in London, Manchester, Glasgow and Liverpool. We just auditioned everybody in the usual way... first a bit of a chat to find out if they have an idea about the character and then try out a few scenes – not from the film – a few scenes from related situations. There were two or three people I think could have made a good stab at it, but in the end we plumped for Crissy.

Did you allow her to improvise?

We worked around the script a bit. And obviously Crissy didn't know what was going to happen all the time. Sometimes it was her gut reaction. I would give her the script a bit at a time, so a lot of the time she might have felt it was improvised, but it is in the script.

The scene in which the social workers break into Maggie's flat to take away her baby reminds me of a similar moment with the loan sharks in 'Raining Stones'. When you're capturing a sudden, violent moment like that, are you consciously influenced by the work you've done for television?

No. The only thing that determined it was the real social workers who were present and told us what they would do. And then working out the best way to make certain you capture it.

And the music, the use of Andean pipes and piano.

Did you tell the composer George Fenton to write a specific kind of music?

George and I talked about it. And we talked about the fact that Jorge is South American, the fact that he is an émigré and he has a past. And also the affection between them – he is very different to the people Maggie has known before. And a way of drawing all those threads together seemed to be to have a South American element to the music. There is something very evocative and haunting about South American music.

The scene at the end where Jorge and Maggie reach and hold hands – was that always the shot with which you intended to finish the film?

That happened on the day. We had another ending which wasn't very good at all. It seemed good in the script, but when we came to shoot it, it was quite inappropriate... the same point in time, but a different, more elaborate conclusion. We were losing the light on the last day of shooting and it was a little bit worrying, how we were going to end it, but then that just seemed natural, the right thing to do. So we finished it there, at a point of exhaustion. It was a long, straggly narrative, but the point of the film was to get the essence of their relationship and the essence of the social context they were in. The story could have gone on, but I don't think we would have learned any more about them.

You're on record as saying you would rather be described as a naturalist than a realist...

Probably the other way round, in fact.

Well, what do these terms mean to you?

The terms mean, I think, just about nothing. I wouldn't embrace either term particularly.

How would you describe your style?

I wouldn't. The moment you start doing that, you start trying to make films to justify the label. The actual process is that you're working with a writer or you find a story that seems like a good idea and everything derives from the material. I don't say I'll now make a naturalist film or a realist film or even a naturalist film. I just get on and tell the story.

I'm thinking of moments like early in 'Raining Stones' where the mother is in church and her hair is suddenly caught in the sunlight, or the scene in 'Ladybird Ladybird' in which Jorge and Maggie are caught in the rain. Do you ever get a hankering to use more visually stylised moments like these?

If it ever has to be stylised, then you've lost.

There should be some powerful images, but they should be part of everything else. If they stand out as at odds with the rest of the work, you've lost it. The fact that it is a powerful image has to be incidental to its other functions in the film.

You never want to be more flamboyant visually?

I'm not sure flamboyance is something I would relish.

There is a truly brutal scene where Ray Winstone hits Crissy Rock. How do you deal with a scene like that in which the violence is foregrounded?

Just by being very plain about it. Being very unvarnished. You have to work it out so that nobody gets hurt, but provided the mechanics of it work, then to do it without any fuss... without beating the drum or winding up the violence in any way. There's no heavy music, nothing to make it anything other than what it is. As though you were just a horrified observer in the room, nothing else.

It seemed to me that what Carol Sarler was accusing you of in the 'Sunday Times', lacking fidelity to facts, reawakened all the old arguments around 'Days of Hope', when there was a similar outcry in the right-wing press. What kind of licence do you feel you have with material like this?

We have to be faithful to the substance of the story. And we are faithful to that. What is rather silly about that article is that she got her facts wrong. If you try to ignore all the malicious innuendo, the only fact she came up with, or that she thought she came up with, is that there was something on the file about the couple which we hadn't disclosed in the film. Which would have justified taking the children away. That "something" is actually acknowledged: Maggie has a line in which she says the social workers are now claiming that one of the men she was with abused the children. That's the only thing Sarler thinks she has found. She also said the real Maggie was from Ireland, which she isn't, and that the three children she has kept are on the 'At Risk' register, which they're not. In the brief phone conversation I had with her, she claimed she cared passionately about the truth, and then she made all these errors.

If you give the characters fictional names,

which we do, but you say it is based on truth, then the substance of the story has to be true. If you say, "this is a true story and here are all the people with their real names", then you have to be closer to the minutiae of the truth. There are degrees of accuracy. In our film, the main core has to be true, though of course the details and characterisation you would expect to be different. But there's nothing omitted that would change our judgment of the characters. Because the story is so remarkable, we had no reason to avoid anything.

Sarler's suggestions that you used some of Crissy Rock's own background to feed into the story – were they also off the mark?

That, again, is interesting. When I auditioned Crissy, she told me a little about her adult life, but mainly we worked on scenes, like I did with everyone else. I didn't know about her childhood until much later, and then only very incidentally, and it was nothing I quizzed her about.

The middle-class social workers in the film come across as the villains. Did you intend this?

No, we tried very hard not to make them the villains. They're all very ordinary people who played them, they all had some hands-on experience. The difficulty for them is that Maggie is presented to them as this angry, uncooperative woman with a history of violence. So we tried to show why they take the decisions they do – based on what's on a file and the person presented to them. I hope you can see why they come to those conclusions. It's a bit like years ago in *Kes*, we tried to show that the careers officer saw one side of the boy and in the film you see he has all other kinds of qualities – he trains the bird and the rest – that no one else sees. The official world sees one aspect of a personality, but we know it is much richer. A social worker wrote to us, unsolicited, to say that we had given three dimensions, a humanity, to people who are seen only as problems. If the film gets anywhere near that, and absorbs people on the way, that would be nice.

Loach, already late for lunch, grimaces when asked if he is as enthusiastic about Kieślowski's films as the Polish director is about his. He says he doesn't go to the cinema much these days, suggests his influences are the same as they always were – the Czech new wave, the Italian neo-realists – and admits that Godard never really meant much to him: "A very unabsorbed influence. A very stimulating, creative film-maker, but the influences that stay with you are the ones that put people on the screen." Self-reflexivity and laying bare the device in best Brechtian fashion are likewise given short shrift. "I think that was something of its time. In the end, people respond to stories. They respond to people's dilemmas and experiences." He is shown a publicity still of himself on the *Ladybird Ladybird* set, waving his arms frenetically. No, he doesn't see himself as a director in the grand style of Josef von Sternberg. How would he describe his manner, then? "I wouldn't. I wouldn't begin to think about it really. Otherwise you get terribly self-conscious."

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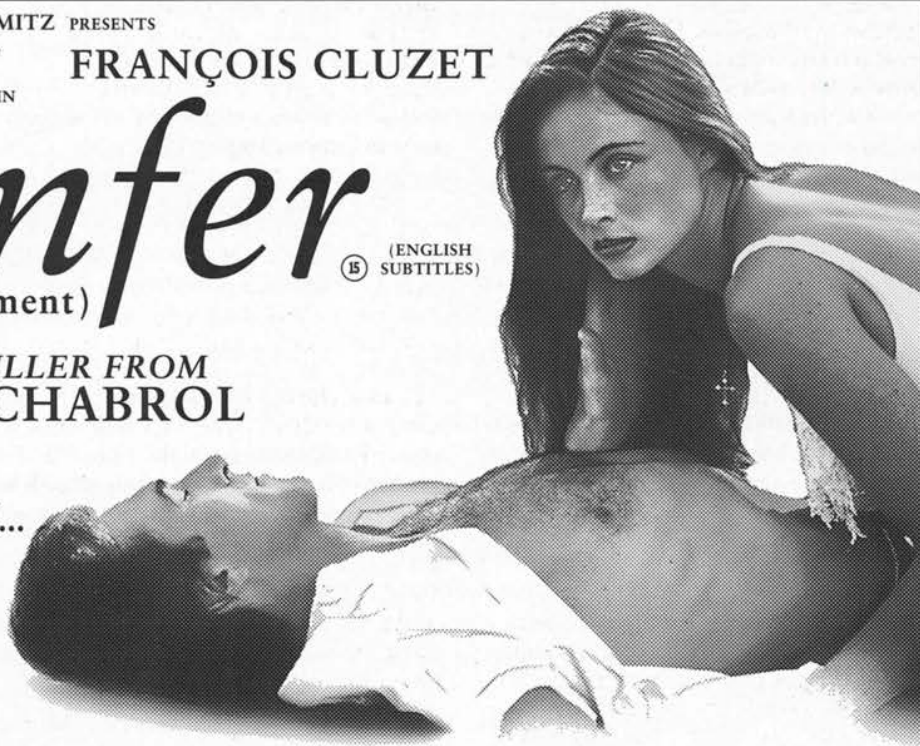
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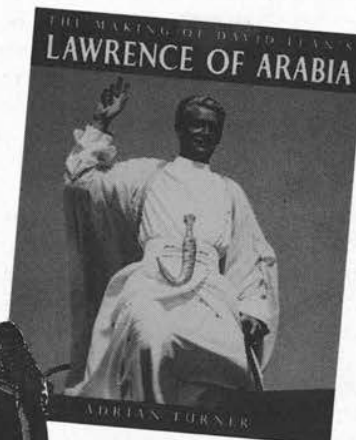
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I'm going to do a Monte Hellman, do two films back to back, do two \$3 or \$4 million movies. Shoot one for five weeks, take a week off, and then start the next one, just keep the crew. Then give one to my editor and I'll edit the other one.

After 'Pulp Fiction' I was going to do a small film and then I was going to try and do a big movie. I didn't know what genre, just a big kick-ass movie. That was the game plan for my first four movies, but 'Pulp Fiction' was such an undertaking it seemed a waste of time to do just one small movie next. I had a lot of fun floating back and forth between the different stories, and felt I could handle more.

I've always been romanced by the idea of Roger Corman going out there and shooting two movies on location, or Monte just pulling it off, as well as anyone has ever done in the history of cinema, with 'The Shooting' and 'Ride in the Whirlwind'. When I finished 'Pulp' I felt my crew and I were so together we could have made another movie if we'd had one ready to go, we were in such a groove.

'Pulp Fiction' was going to be my goodbye to the crime genre, at least for a while. It's a get-it-out-of-your-system movie, three movies for the price of one. What I wanted to do afterwards is work in other genres, all kinds. I would like to do a musical some time. I'm thinking about doing a movie that would be very personal, about something that happened to me, but again I'd break it down to genre, like a 'La

Règle du jeu'—'Shampoo' kind of thing. And that's not 'The Player' kind of talk, that's just me.

I was going to do other sorts of movies, then revisit the crime genre from time to time. I don't want to be the gun guy. I think I would become really boring if I was just known as the guy who did gangster movies. At the same time, fuck it, if it's what you really want to do... It's a little debate I'm having with myself because 'Pulp' was designed to be the goodbye.

To me John Cassavetes' movies are a genre, he's a genre in and of himself. Merchant-Ivory are as strict a genre as you're ever going to find, they're stricter than a women-in-prison movie. I love the idea of going into a genre and taking all the familiars we like and giving them back to you in new ways. Say 'The Guns of Navarone' had never been made and I read Alistair Maclean's book and wanted to do it. I'd want to deliver all the thrills and the spills, the pleasure and the fun, except that those guys would talk like my guys. They wouldn't be stock characters, they would be human beings with a heartbeat who would talk about things other than just blowing up the canons. I want to set up a situation you've seen a zillion times before and then throw in real-life kicking and screaming so that it fucks up everybody's plans. Not just come up with a higher mountain these guys have to climb, or throw in a rainstorm or a troop of Nazis, but real-life holes they can fall into

QUENTIN TARANTINO ON PULP FICTION

AS TOLD TO MANOHLA DARGIS



THE SET-UP

Everything in Los Angeles revolves around restaurants. You get together with your friends at restaurants, you have dates at restaurants, business meetings at restaurants. In many other cities you have to be of a certain wealth to go to restaurants, but in Los Angeles we have coffee shops that are open all night long. So you can not have a pot to piss in and still afford to go to a coffee shop and hang out. My friends and I would go to coffee shops late at night and be there for hours, like our version of hanging out in a Parisian café and discussing existentialism, except we were talking about New World Pictures and whether we were ever going to be with a woman.

COSTUME

When Jean-Pierre Melville was making his crime films, he talked about how it was very important that his characters have a suit of armour. His was the snap-brim fedora and Bogart-like trenchcoat. Leone had the dusters, Eastwood the poncho. I've always said the mark of any good action film is that when you get through seeing it, you want to dress like the character. That's totally the case, for instance, with Chow Yun-Fat's wardrobe in the 'A Better Tomorrow' movies. The black suits in 'Pulp Fiction', that's my suit of armour. Guys look cool in black suits, but what's interesting is how they get reconstructed during the course of the movie. When you first see Vincent and Jules, their suits are cut and crisp, they look like real bad-asses. But as the movie goes on, their suits get more and more fucked up until they're stripped off and the two are dressed in the exact antithesis – volleyball wear, which is not cool. As to Sam Jackson's jheri-curls, that happened by mistake. I've always liked Afros – if I were black, I'd wear an Afro. I talked to Sam about wearing an Afro and he was up for that. The make-up woman went out to get some Afro wigs, but because she didn't know the difference she also showed up with the jheri-curl wig. Sam put it on, and it was great. It was Jules.



JACKRABBIT SLIM'S

Every big city has a couple of them, these 50s retro restaurants. I don't like them that much, to me they are always trying too hard. In fact, the script even says, "Either the best or the worst of these places, depending on your point of view." This one is a cross between the 50s restaurants that exist, the nightclub where Elvis Presley and the car racers hang out in 'Speedway', and the bar where all the racecar drivers hang out in Howard Hawks' 'Red Line 7000'. The thing that makes it work is the racing-car motif. The dancefloor is done like a speedometer, and I threw in little things, as if I were running a restaurant. Most of the posters are not just from any old 50s movies, they're directed by Roger Corman. And if I were going to have 50s icons on the menu, there would be a Douglas Sirk Steak. I wouldn't let them rent out a real 50s restaurant, I wanted to do it from scratch. But when you have a set that great, you're almost intimidated by it. Oh, my God, how do I make it live? What I tried to do is introduce it through Vincent's eyes as he walks through. But the scene ain't about the restaurant, so after I get through taking it all in, just forget it. Show it off and then, fuck it.



DANCING

I always love the musical sequences in movies, and I particularly love them when the movies aren't musicals. My favourite musical sequences have always been in Godard, because they just come out of nowhere. It's so infectious, so friendly. And the fact that it's not a musical, but he's stopping the movie to have a musical sequence, makes it all the more sweet. The last movie I saw that did something like that was Christopher Münch's 'The Hours and Times', where all of a sudden Lennon puts on the Little Richard 45 and starts dancing. Whenever I'd see those scenes in a Godard movie, it made me wish I had a rewind facility in the cinema. Sometimes they almost ruin the movie, because you love them so much, you want to go over it again and again. In 'Le Petit Soldat', when she's doing the interview, taking her pictures, and all of a sudden she puts on some classical music and dances around the room. When she takes the music off, you're like, "Oh, it's over." I learned that for this film, don't let it linger.

THE GOLD WATCH

In Roger Avary's original story, the fact that Butch had a gold watch came out of nowhere. Roger spent all this time trying to sell us on why Butch had to go back into danger, and he did a really good job, but he didn't quite sell it. I thought, well, it's a contrivance, and what you do with a plot contrivance is feature it. At that point in the movie, you're disoriented because the first story has ended. And then you have Christopher Walken doing this whole long thing about the watch, and then there's the title card, 'The Gold Watch', and then there's this boxer, and you're wondering, "What the fuck did that have to do with anything?" And then you get in that motel room and you're there forever. You've forgotten that gold watch and Walken. And then Butch says, "Where's my gold watch?" You can write a three-page monologue and good luck on having someone deliver it perfectly. Chris Walken is one of those actors who can and rarely gets the opportunity to do so. I called him up and said, "Chris, I have a three-page monologue for you and I promise I won't cut a word." We planned to do it on the last day of shooting: when he came in I told him he had all day, we're not going to leave until we get it right. And we did.



DRUGS

Lance is a totally LA type, he's your friendly drug-dealer. Margaret Cho did a hysterical stand-up routine about the problem with going out and buying drugs: you have to feign a relationship with your drug-dealer, like you're not going over to buy pot, you're going on a social visit and drugs are incidental. You have to sit down and talk about things, as opposed to here's the money, give me my shit, let me get out of here. Mia doesn't do too well by drugs. One journalist told me I could show that whole first scene of her overdose to schoolkids as an anti-drug movie. People ask me where I came up with the story about the overdose: the bottom line is that every junkie, or person who has experimented seriously with heroin, has a version of that story – they almost died, someone else almost died and they brought them back with salt water, or put them in a tub, or jumped them with a car battery. What's interesting is that the scene is very harrowing and very funny at the same time, and that the harrowing aspect and the funny aspect are both coming from the same place, it's the reality of it that is both totally freaky and totally funny.



LIGHTING

I'm really anal when it comes to the framing, but my cinematographer Andrzej Sekula handles the lighting, that's where he gets to paint. We shoot on 50 ASA film stock, which is the slowest stock they make. The reason we use it is that it creates an almost no-grain image, it's lustrous. It's the closest thing we have to 50s Technicolor. When I first met Andrzej on 'Reservoir Dogs', I only knew that I wanted it to pop, I wanted the reds to be red and the blacks to be black. It looks great, but it's a pain in the ass to shoot with, you need light coming in from everywhere just to get an image. But because of the way I write my scenes, once you get somewhere, you're there for a while. So we bathe the place in light, create a lot of texture and play around with the depth of field, which is something you normally don't have, particularly when you're shooting with anamorphic lenses. We carry people in the background and foreground as much as I've ever seen in a film with anamorphic lenses. When we looked at dailies I felt we were pushing the envelope.



GORE

Every time you try to show gore realistically, it looks absurd, operatic. People go on about Tim Roth bleeding to death in 'Reservoir Dogs', but that's the reality. If someone is shot in the stomach, that's how they die. Put them in one spot in a room and they're going to have a pool growing around them. That might look crazy, but it's the truth and it's because you're not used to seeing the truth that it looks pushed. There was a line in 'Pulp Fiction' with Jules and Jimmie talking that we didn't shoot. Jimmie asks what the fuck happened to the car, and Jules answers: "Jimmie, if you were inside of a car, and you were to shoot a water melon at point-blank range with a nine millimetre, do you know what would happen?" "No, what?" "You'd get water melon all over!" To me, even though it's got a foot in real life, it also has a foot in Monty Python. It's funny. It's about appearance: we've got to clean up the car, we've got to clean us up, we've got to get the shit out of his house so Jimmie doesn't appear to be a criminal when his wife comes home.

The idea is to take genre characters and put them in real-life situations and make them live by real-life rules. In normal movies, they're too busy telling the plot to have guns go off accidentally and kill someone we don't give a damn about. But it

happens, so we go down that track. And it's not just some clean little hole in the chest, it's a messy wound they've got to deal with, and it's a big problem. The humour to me comes from this realistic situation, and then in waltzes this complete movie creation, the Wolf-Harvey Keitel. This movie star walks in, sprinkles some movie dust, and solves the problem.

● 'Pulp Fiction' opens on 21 October and is reviewed on page 50

THE WORLDS OF HARRY SALTZMAN

BY LEN DEIGHTON

Harry Saltzman, who died last month, was a rare producer, equally at home with James Bond and Tony Richardson



“Just when *Sight and Sound* have decided I’m a hero,” said Harry Saltzman reflectively. “After this [film] they’ll make me into some kind of monster.”

Harry Saltzman told me this at our first meeting. I’d driven out to the studios to have lunch with him. *Dr No* (the first of the Saltzman-Broccoli Bond films) had just started its run in London’s West End. During our lunch one of Harry’s men came to the table. He waited without speaking. Eventually Harry turned to him and said: “How’s it going?”

“They’re laughing,” said the man impassively.

Harry frowned. “Are they laughing at Bond or laughing with him?”

“I think they’re laughing with us,” said the man.

“It’ll be all right,” said Harry, and the man departed.

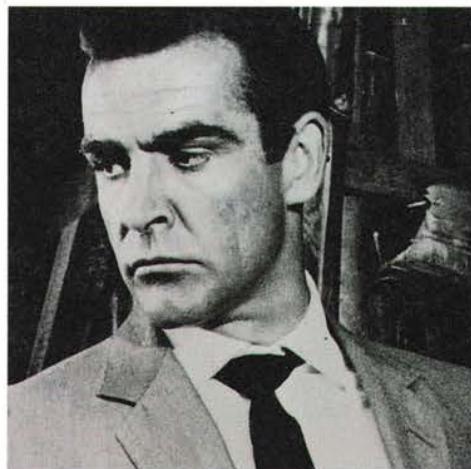
Harry had every reason to be concerned about an audience laughing at James Bond. Ian Fleming, Bond’s creator, had just chosen my first book, *The Ipcress File*, as his ‘Book of the Year’, but had added the caveat: “But I don’t think thrillers should be funny.” Poor Ian, whatever would he have thought about a series of Bond films that, ever more outrageous in plot and situation, ended up as light comedies for family entertainment?

I had never glimpsed a film producer before that lunch in the dining room at Pinewood, but my first impression of Harry Saltzman did not disappoint. Beautifully dressed, as always, here was the sort of chubby, cigar-smoking figure that Central Casting chose as a ‘Hollywood film producer’ in the old black and white movies with which I’d grown up. Saying goodbye as I climbed into my dented Volkswagen Beetle, I remember Harry in his flawless vicuna coat, with short wavy grey hair, a tiny ever-ready smile and large sad eyes. He looked like a teddy bear: the very chic, expensive ones that grubby children are never permitted to cuddle. Harry’s elevation to ‘hero’ was his due as a partner (with dramatist John Osborne and director

Tony Richardson) in Woodfall Films. Woodfall was best known for filming popular novels with working-class anti-heroes and kitchen-sink stage plays, many of which had filled the prestigious Royal Court Theatre. *Look Back in Anger* (1959), *The Entertainer* (1960), *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) and *A Taste of Honey* (1961) were all Woodfall productions.

At that lunch Harry told me that in order to be in favour with “the *Sight and Sound* crowd”, it was essential that everything you did lost money. Harry was not given to making prophecies (apart from the usual optimistic show-business hype), but he had already prepared himself for the fact that Eon Films (the Saltzman-Broccoli partnership which secured options on most of the Bond film rights) was not going to qualify him for that sort of popularity.

In fact, Harry was far from the archetypal Hollywood producer of today. He was a happily married, well-read Canadian of wide interests; cosmopolitan in a way that North Americans seldom become. Most meetings ended up with all concerned sitting round a table and eating the dishes Harry decided they should eat. In French and Italian restaurants, he would wave the menu away and simply tell the waiter what he wanted to eat and how he liked it cooked.



A Saltzman discovery: Sean Connery as James Bond

I tried this imperious technique with varying results, but for Harry it always worked perfectly. He liked food so much that he eventually bought a London restaurant. I found him generous in every way, and quick with little asides which were often funny and sometimes cruel. He laughed readily, but the only time I saw him roll around in merriment was while listening to someone recounting the serious misfortunes that had befallen some rival producer. He spoke excellent French and I saw him looking equally at home in Paris, Istanbul and London. He was a compulsive spender. At airports he would impulsively buy all manner of goods – from kitsch to works of art – and then hand the packages to whichever member of his entourage was nearest. “Always keep at least one person between you and Harry,” an art director warned me too late when I was burdened with a prayer rug at Athens airport.

The full story of the formation of the Saltzman and Broccoli partnership, and its labyrinth dealings with the many owners of the James Bond film rights, has never been told. Like so many Hollywood stories, the true facts of Harry’s life are more surprising and entertaining than anything a writer of fiction could contrive. I dearly wish John Osborne would make Harry the subject of a non-fiction book, for he knows where the bodies are buried and has the wily and resourceful talent needed to disinter them. Also, I believe that, like me, he has an enduring affection for Harry.

In assessing the talents of Saltzman and Broccoli one must remember that spy stories were neither fashionable nor particularly popular in those early days of the 60s. The description ‘spy films’ conjured up smoky ‘European’ black and whites high on characterisation, atmosphere and dialogue and low on optical definition and plot. Graham Greene, Eric Ambler, Somerset Maugham, Carol Reed, Orson Welles, Fritz Lang and Alfred Hitchcock had all left their mark on this type of film. A buff of that period asked to name some classic spy films might have listed: *I Was a Spy* (1933), *The*



Kitchen-sink hero: Michael Caine as the working-class Harry Palmer in the Harry Saltzman-produced 'The Ipcress File'

Secret Agent (1936); *The Lady Vanishes* (1938); *Night Train to Munich* (1940); *Foreign Correspondent* (1940); *Journey into Fear* (1942); *Ministry of Fear* (1944); *The Mask of Dimitrios* (1944) and *Berlin Express* (1948). All are still worth seeking out.

Saltzman and Broccoli had no intention of making the Fleming stories into such arty films. The American audience sets less store by characterisation, atmosphere and dialogue than do Europeans. Americans on the whole prefer well-shaped stories with simple plots and hard conclusions. Films that are destined to be international successes need spirited action rather than the baffling wit and subtleties of well-written dialogue (which is often poorly dubbed or inaccurately subtitled).

In all these respects, the Saltzman and Broccoli epics scored. Fleming's spy stories, hav-

ing already moved well away from Greene, Maugham and Ambler, were well suited to become glossy, large-scale boys' adventures. Sean Connery demonstrated electronic gadgets and futuristic vehicles to a newly affluent public dazzled by an avalanche of similar wonder toys that were arriving every week from Japanese factories.

Harry intended that my book *The Ipcress File*, with its working-class, bespectacled hero, would become a kitchen-sink spy film. But finding Michael Caine (a perfect Harry Palmer) took time, and with Bond-mania increasing with every Connery film, he found this resolve difficult to maintain. So *The Ipcress File*, planned as an all-location production bringing a new sort of gritty realism to the spy movie, went into the studio. In Pinewood they shot a flashy

James Bond-style sequence based on an article about brain-washing Harry had seen in *Life* magazine. I heard later that he had tried to insert the same sequence into his current Bond film, but had been strenuously opposed.

When I bought the film rights of *Oh! What a Lovely War* (writing a script without owning the rights seemed somewhat risky), I went along to see Harry in his South Audley Street office to seek his blessing for my project. We sat and drank coffee together and he talked to me about the dangers and pitfalls, the treachery and delusion of the film world as if I was his son. As I got to my feet to leave, he added a final warning: "Make sure you don't buy yourself a packet of litigation, Len." A little chuckle. "There are cheaper ways of getting into court." He might well have noted his own advice, for he was to have more than his fair share of purchased litigation. But being Harry, he never complained and stoically kept his sense of humour throughout many misfortunes.

I saw Harry several times after that. I visited him in the tiny circular rooftop office when he was running the H. M. Tennent theatre empire. I saw him in his dimly lit apartment off Victoria Street when he was experimenting with lenses that enlarge television screens.

I always felt obliged to him for putting my writing career into a high gear at that time when writers most need a boost: the very beginning. He always kept his word to me, even at times when he would have benefited from forgetting. He was always enthusiastic and encouraging, even when being a little less encouraging might have enabled him to drive a better bargain. I liked him very much indeed, and I always enjoyed his company. Many people felt equally warmly towards him. But Harry seemed to find it difficult to believe that he was popular. I suppose that was why he had those sad eyes. Oh, I almost forgot: did the "Sight and Sound crowd" make him into a monster? You tell me.

Harry Saltzman: born Sherbrook, Canada 27 October 1915; died Paris, 28 September 1994

As London's ICA launches a season of Korean cinema, Tony Rayns sketches recent developments and talks with the director Jang Sun-Woo

KOREA'S NEW WEVERS

There must be a blockage of some kind. That's the only possible explanation for the west's failure to respond to recent developments in Korean cinema. One obvious problem is that we have no tradition of looking at or distributing Korean movies: there are no Korean 'masters' with established reputations, and there is no western-language literature on Korean cinema. But no one in the west (except perhaps members of a few 'fellow-traveller' friendship organisations) looked at Chinese cinema either until Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* came along, yet these days there are bidding wars between distributors to acquire the latest Chinese hits. Why haven't Korea's new-wavers achieved the same kind of breakthrough?

The parallel between Korean and Chinese cinema is in fact surprisingly close: in both cases, a tottering and deeply conservative film industry constrained by tough censorship was invaded by a new generation of film-makers with new ideas about what their cinema should be doing. China's Fifth Generation directors were coming out of the Cultural Revolution, a decade-long political upheaval that

shook up their sense of themselves, their country and their culture. The equivalent primal trauma for the young Koreans was the uprising and massacre in Kwangju in May 1980, the shocking event that sparked off 13 years of ferocious anti-government activism and (in 1993) led to the end of militarist rule and the election of South Korea's first civilian president, the former oppositionist Kim Young-Sam. The Koreans, in other words, were marked by an event more like the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre than the protracted collective mania of the Cultural Revolution.

This is a significant difference, which may well illuminate one of the factors that has held Korean cinema back from international acclaim. In *Yellow Earth*, Chen Kaige was able to finesse his own Cultural Revolution experiences (as a self-confident intellectual sent to a backward village that ended up subverting all his ideological certainties) into a historical anecdote with almost limitless connotations; the film's international success proved that it wasn't necessary to know anything about Chinese Communist Party history or Yan'an in the 30s to be able to relate to that soldier or those villagers. But when Korean director Park Kwang-Su expressed his own political frustration and anger in *Black Republic* (*Kedeuldo Uri-chorom*, 1990), through the story of a wanted man with a ten-year history of involvement in the activist underground, few in the west picked up on his achievement. Maybe *Black Republic* is too specific in its references – or too committed to a kind of activism deemed *passé* in the west – to be engaging to non-Korean audiences?

The Korean new wave had its beginnings in the universities in the late 70s, just before the Kwangju massacre gave the political opposition its excuse for turning violent. The initial impulse was to attack 'Chungmuro film-making' (Chungmuro being the district in central Seoul where most commercial film companies have their offices) for its 'insincerity', its

reliance on exhausted genres and its failure to deal with social realities. For tactical reasons, the movement's front was aesthetic: it called for non-commercial short films that would extend Korean film language and open up new spaces in film culture. With perfect synchronicity, at this moment industry director Im Kwon-Taek (who had been churning out genre quickies since 1962, sometimes at the rate of eight a year) began to take his own work more seriously and to make more ambitious features. He turned his career around decisively with the still-remarkable *Mandala* in 1981, since when he has made consistently distinguished films and won growing acclaim on the festival circuit. Im is now the only veteran Korean film-maker on the cusp of (deserved) international recognition as a great director.

The authorities responded to the rise of the short-film movement by inaugurating the Korean Film Academy in 1984. Many of the jobbing assistant directors in the film and advertising industries today are graduates from the academy, and some graduates are in the process of establishing themselves as new wave directors. But the industry these young people are entering is very different from the industry of ten years ago. That was a highly regulated and censored system which kept competition from abroad in check by imposing quotas on imported movies. The industry is now almost fully deregulated, with the result that American majors like UIP (now permitted to function autonomously) effortlessly dominate the box office. Fighting for an ever-shrinking share of their domestic market, many Korean producers have cut back production or given up entirely. The latest trend, led by Park Kwang-Su, is for ambitious directors to form their own small independent companies and go looking for new sources of finance.

Despite the many obstacles, new wave directors have made considerable headway in the ►

▼ This is from the beginning of the film: Sonje, the protagonist, is scattering his adoptive father's ashes in the river. We have already seen the cremation, and the girl Iryon scattering flowers on the pyre. In Buddhist terms, this scene marks the start of Sonje's journey. He is discarding

all the trappings of the past. We shot the scene on the River Man-kyong in Cholla-do, which runs through the country's largest rice paddies. It's the last unpolluted river we have left; wild lotuses still grow in it. The moment is fascinating: the gravity of the children, the river, the hazy light.



▼ When Sonje meets good people on his journey, his faith that he will find his mother grows stronger. The blind girl Ina is one of the good ones; he loves her, and later returns to her – because she wanted to hear his flute again. But when she does hear it again, she says she never listens to things twice, and advises him to follow things that are fluid. Fluidity is a key concept in Buddhism. The core of the film's meaning is the emphasis on the middle way. Opposites like sorrow and happiness or love and hate are not polarised but blurred. Ina loves the woman who betrayed her, and still waits for the man who blinded her. She demonstrates that through singing a sad song, you can overcome sorrow. That's what is meant by 'fluidity'.



▲ Sonje is searching for his mother. Pobwoon, the Buddhist monk he meets in this tent restaurant, tells him he will find her if he has wisdom and faith. The monk gives him a flute, which comes to represent his inner growth; its sound changes as he goes through his journey. When he eventually finds his mother, he throws the flute away; in other words, finding his mother means attaining enlightenment. Pobwoon (who crosses Sonje's path three times in the film) is the only practising Buddhist he meets. It's impossible to say who Pobwoon is. He could be Sonje's mother. He could be Buddha himself.



▲ This image is from Sonje's reverie while he's riding on the back of the ox. He imagines being kissed by this Bodhisatva, who is, of course, another face of Buddha. She fulfils his desire for worldly pleasures, wealth and so on, and so her sudden death teaches him that those pleasures have no lasting meaning. The entire scene reflects another aspect of 'middle way' philosophy: the teaching that reality and fantasy are indissoluble.

I found Oh Tae-Kyung, the boy who plays Sonje, at an audition. He was the right age (in the novel, the boy is between 9 and 11), and I liked the way he looked and the fact that he had no previous experience of acting. It was hard to direct him at the beginning, because neither of us really knew what we were doing. But as we went on, he started to learn and gave an increasingly instinctive performance. Me? I was still confused.

◀ years since Jang Sun-Woo and Park Kwang-Su spearheaded the move from political activism into feature film-making. Park, born in 1955, was associated with two prominent short-film-making groups in Seoul and studied film in Paris before making his first feature in 1988. (That was *Chilsu and Mansu*, based on a Taiwanese story then banned in Korea; the film starts out looking like a Korean cousin to a John Hughes teenage movie, but soon matures into an exhilarating tragi-comedy of rumbling social discontent.) Jang, born in 1952, never made shorts but did contribute television scripts before embarking on an over-ambitious independent feature in 1985. *Seoul Jesus* (Seoul Jesu, co-directed with the more technically experienced Son-U Won) took two years to shoot and another two years to get past the censors and into release: its account of an escapee from a mental hospital who announces himself as the revenant Christ was transparently too dissident for comfort in the eyes of the authorities.

Aside from proving that it was possible to make features for exhibition in cinemas without sacrificing personal and political integrity, the importance of Jang and Park's first films was that they challenged the dominance of generic formulas. Many other young directors have rushed into the space those films opened up. Lee Myung-Se, born in 1957, has used every possibility offered by studio artifice to explore domestic and emotional conflicts from unexpected angles; his interest in the effects of time and his penchant for visual stylisation (both most notable in his best film to date, *First Love/Chut Sarang*, 1993) sometimes make him look like Korea's answer to Alain Resnais. Kim Ui-Seok, also born in 1957 and a member of the first class to graduate from the Film Academy, has tackled gender politics in two groundbreaking sex-war comedies. Hwang Gyu-Dok made a punchy first feature on the shortcom-

ings of Korean schools before getting sidetracked into teen-romance movies. Hong Ki-Sun, former leader of the most hardline Marxist of the underground film groups, came up with a startlingly poetic first feature about a political fugitive finding a new life as a trawlerman – a film that John Grierson would have loved. The list could go on.

But it's the two new wave pioneers who have assembled the most impressive bodies of work. Park Kwang-Su went on from *Chilsu and Mansu* and *Black Republic* to make the Wenders-like *Berlin Report* (1991), a bizarre allegory of Korea's partition and possible reunification shot in France and Germany before the dust from the demolished Berlin Wall had settled, and has recently released his first independent production, *To the Starry Island* (Gesom e Kako Shipta, 1993). This offers a full-blooded vision of traditional Korean society as it was before the Korean War, seen through the microcosm of a small off-shore island cut off from most outside influences. Beautifully acted, the film questions the stereotype of Korea as a patriarchy and reflects soberly on the obstacles to Korean reunification.

Jang Sun-Woo's films to date add up to an even stronger argument for wider showings of the new Korean cinema. Criss-crossed by engaging contradictions, his work has swung between satire and sex, between social commentary and philosophy. His biggest international success has been *Hwa-om-kyung* (1993, winner of a major prize at this year's Berlin Film Festival), which is doubtless the most searching of all the many Korean films about Buddhism. But this extraordinary philosophical movie, full of 'magic' yet founded on a brutally frank look at human mistakes and cruelties, is sandwiched in his filmography by two films about sex: *Road to the Racetrack* (Kyong-machang Kanungil, 1991), which is about a married man educated in Paris trying to get his former mistress back into bed and failing, and the just-completed *To You, I'm Sending Myself*

(Neo-e-ge Narul Bonenda, 1994), which centres on a woman's sexual pursuit of a reluctant man and is reportedly giving the Korean Ethics Committee its biggest headache since Louis Malle's *Damage*.

When we sat down to talk this summer in Seoul, Jang opted to comment on stills from *Hwa-om-kyung*. The film has an unusual origin. Its title is the Korean name of the Avatamsaka Sutra, a fifth-century BC classic of Mahayana Buddhist scripture. In 1991, the writer Ko Un published a novel based on the sutra, an imagined biography of its protagonist Sonje, describing his quest for nirvana. Jang had the idea of adapting the novel by transposing its setting from ancient India to modern Korea; his notion was that relating a 'fantastic' story in recognisable social settings would generate a dialectic that would illuminate both the story's philosophy and the society's failings. He says he came to the film because he found himself dissatisfied with orthodox ways of seeing and evaluating Korean society; the Buddhist framework offered a different perspective. When I asked him if the Buddhist doctrine of passivity didn't contradict his own past as an activist, he scratched his head and grinned. "My own character is so changeable," he said, "and society is so complicated. There are still so many aspects of both that I want to explore."

The film's Sonje is an orphan, found abandoned in a blanket and raised by a thief. The story opens with the death of his adoptive father; the boy then sets off in search of his mother, with only the blanket in which he was found as a clue to her identity. In the course of a quest that takes him all over South Korea and through many years, Sonje never ages physically, although the people he meets do. Grateful thanks to Park Ki-Yong for translation and other assistance. 'Seoul Stirring: Five Korean Directors' is at the ICA, London from 21 October to 10 November. Tel: 071 930 3647 for details.

Jang Sun-Woo's films have swung between satire and sex, social commentary and philosophy. His biggest international success has been 'Hwa-om-kyung'

▼ Sonje is determined to meet the political prisoner Haewoon, and the only way of reaching him inside the jail is to get himself arrested. So he steals the ox. It's while riding the ox and playing his flute that he drifts into the reverie in which he meets the

woman Boddhisatva. When he finally does get himself sent to jail and meets Haewoon, Sonje tells him that it took three cow-thefts to get there. In Korean Buddhism, cows and oxen are symbols of finding enlightenment. This particular animal, whose name is

Chun-Ji (Heaven-Earth), embodies another aspect of the middle way: one of its horns is upturned and the other downturned. It's not a pure Korean ox, but a product of cross-breeding with imported cattle. It had a really nice arse.



▼ Iryon seduces Sonje during a storm in the mountains. We shot this scene in the Chiri Mountains during a real typhoon. When we arrived there, we held a ceremony to pray to the mountain god. The typhoon turned up on cue a few hours later, and so we figured that Buddha was helping us. In Ko Un's novel, the equivalent scene takes place in a desert. When the film opened in Korea, Oh Tae-Kyung gave an interview in which he cited this as one of the two most difficult scenes he had to do. (The other was Sonje's dream of drowning.) I can't deny that it was a painful scene for him to shoot. He didn't understand what he was acting at the time. He realised only afterwards what the scene was all about.



▲ This was a difficult scene for me to write and direct. The setting is a mason's workshop. The man with his back to the camera is the monk Pobwoon (it's the second of his three appearances in the story), and the young woman in the centre is Iryon, who was a little girl at Sonje's father's cremation. Now she has grown to maturity, but Sonje hasn't changed physically at all; his only growth has been inner. Pobwoon has brought the two of them together after all these years, and it's an awkward moment for both of them. Iryon's name means 'Lotus' and she, too, is an aspect of Buddha. What she represents to Sonje is the temptation to settle down and raise a family. I suppose the Christian equivalent would be the last temptation of Christ as imagined by Kazantzakis.



◀ This was shot on Cheju Island. When Sonje decides to drown himself, this woman appears and saves him. She throws the lotus flower to him – which means that he knows at last that he has found what he has been looking for. There are several ways of seeing this woman with the lotus flower. For Sonje, she represents his mother. She is also a symbol of wisdom. And she could equally be an image of Buddha. Towards the end of the film, there's a scene in which Sonje eats dirt and drinks polluted water. In his mind, it's the food and wine his mother has prepared for him. In other words, it all comes from the mind. If you think it's rice, it is rice.

Does 'Fear of a Black Hat' do for rap what 'This Is Spinal Tap' did for rock? Edward George reflects on the pain and pleasures of hip-hop, the traffic of black culture across the Atlantic, and what kind of movie the music deserves

BENEATH THE HATS

● I'm sitting in Central Park making small talk with Brand Nubian spokesman Lord Jamar while the film crew sets up an interview for Black Audio Film Collective's hip-hop/reggae documentary *Dark Side of Black*. Brand Nubian made a homophobic rap record, and since the film is about homophobia in rap and reggae, we thought it a good idea to talk to them. Brand Nubian are members of the 5% Nation, a splinter group of the Nation of Islam, a black separatist new world Islamic group. Lord Jamar told me he was a god. He also told me about the days when B-boys would go to clubs to hear rap in the full knowledge that they could be beaten, stabbed or shot for their gold chains and sneakers, or because it was just that sort of night. Well, if hip-hop is the music of the gods, it must be worth getting killed for. Brand Nubian believe the war of Armageddon will be fought between blacks and whites and that they are here to prepare black youth for that day. They believe white people are devils, and on some days I can see their point.

I like hip-hop because, like roots reggae and free jazz, it possesses and is sometimes possessed by a prophetic power, born of a faith in the ability of belief systems whose roots lie in mystic traditions, to deliver fundamental truths about the human condition in general and the black condition in particular. These are mystic traditions with one foot in radical movements and moments: Garveyism, Rastafarianism, black power, the black church. I like these musics because they allow space in the popular for certain sorts of takes on racial life and identity. Even while negating other black voices, they nonetheless keep race on the agenda and poetic talk of racial advancement in the air. And if the worst comes to the worst, we can always use the music to test the value of the worldview it offers, be it the millenarian fantasies of Nation of Islam-inspired rap, or in this case the millenarian fantasies of Rusty Cundieff's *Fear of a Black Hat*.

Hats in hip hop I discovered during the making of *Dark Side of Black* that rap's millenarian tendency runs as deep as the millenarian ethos it keeps warm. Public Enemy's Chuck D refused to be filmed without his hat. Brand Nubian all wore what can tactfully be described as 'funny' hats. Ice Cube used to wear a baseball cap over his cute jheri-curls. Then he grew an Afro, which Isaac Julien thought very stylish. Cube now sports a crop; like hats, hair couture in hip-hop is an interesting index of ideas about black identity, mobility, cultural affiliation. The problem for rap fans is which do we put first – the style that sells the substance or the substance that confers meaning on the style? Couture or consciousness?

Somewhere in London, a boy is spinning on his head

What I like about *Fear of a Black Hat* is that I get to play every hip-hop anal retentive's favourite game, 'Spot the Rap Reference' – the game that confers instant belonging to black subculture. Here we go. *Fear of a Black Hat* is a play on Public Enemy's *Fear of a Black Planet*; rap group Niggaz With Hats' name is a play on the now-defunct Niggaz With Attitude; Tasty-Taste looks like ex-NWA's Eazy E, and sometimes sounds a bit like PE's Flavor Flav; Ice Cold looks a bit like Lord Jamar from Brand Nubian and sounds sort of like Ice-T; Tone Def's name plays on Tone Loc's and Def Jef's, and his physiognomy and new group New Hormone Formation play on fat rapper Prince Be from PM Dawn. The managers are all a bit like former NWA manager Jerry Heller. The songs: 'My Peanuts' equals Run DMC's 'My Adidas'; 'Guerrillas in the Midst' takes its name from Da Lench Mob's similarly named LP; 'I'm Gonna Kick Yo Black Ass' plays on the antipathy between former NWA members Dr Dre and Eazy E, while the video and song mimic L. L. Cool J's 'Mama Said Knock You Out'. Mabel Ann could be Lollette Holloway, or any singer whose voice gets ripped off and sampled for cheesy dance hits. Biology notwithstanding, the documentary film-maker Nina Blackburn could be me. That's half the fun out of the way.

The other half is spotting the film's broader targets: the response of the US media to rap's play on sex (c.f. 2 Live Crew controversy); anger (Public Enemy, Ice-T, Ice Cube); rap's commodification of black nationalism (c.f. Public Enemy/Boogie Down Productions especially their *By Any Means Necessary* LP); rappers from middle-class backgrounds who pimp black sexuality and use the language of the street and lifestyles of the lumpen gangsta to sell themselves (NWA); rappers who go hippy-trippy mystic (PM Dawn), fall out and regroup (NWA), and use rap as a way into making films that contradict their recording personae (Ice Cube/Ice-T).

The triumph of the ill In their bumbling idiocy, NWA don't share the business acumen of the rappers the film sends up: 2 Live Crew boss Luther Campbell's million-dollar, black-owned label is a tribute to the myth of black capitalism; Public Enemy single-handedly reintroduced race consciousness into black pop; NWA have sold 28 million albums since 1986. NWA changed the sound of hip-hop from east coast experimentation to smoothed-out west coast formalised funk and in so doing shifted the culture's sales and profile centre from New York to LA. They, more than 2 Live Crew or Public Enemy, seem to be the film's real targets.

NWA's biggest achievement may be as cultural negationists – as hip-hop bible *The Source* puts it, NWA "single handedly changed the

course of rap from being all about African beads and revolutionary dreams to being all about black hats and gritty realities". Or to put it another way, the talk of bitches, nigger-killing, boozing and blunt smoking that pervades hip-hop at the moment can be traced back to NWA. They made the lumpen saleable, first to blacks then to whites, and they did it better than anyone else. When NWA split, former member Dr Dre gave the world *The Chronic* LP (1992), which begat Snoop Doggy Dog, perfected the language of black-on-black violence, narcotisms and misogyny, and confirmed through phenomenally large sales that the lumpen gangsta figure was indelibly marketable. In America alone, *The Chronic* sold over 3 million copies, Snoop's *Doggystyle* (1993) over 4 million. There's a film to be made about NWA which may have more in common with Bertolucci's *The Conformist* than with *Fear of a Black Hat*.

B-boys in film Like a lot of rap in 1994, *Fear of a Black Hat*, which was made in 1992, doesn't stray far from the trivia of intra-rap concerns. *Fear 2* will no doubt be replete with jokes about blunts, 40s and bootleggers. What I like about rap is the way it tries and sometimes fails interestingly to make sense of black American life's minutiae. A film that tried to make sense out of black life, whose subject matter was a rap group trying to make sense of their lives, might have more in common with *Germany, Year Zero*, *Performance* or *Killer of Sheep*.

Needless to say, none of these films will ever make the true gangsta/B-boy top ten film list. That accolade may go to Brian De Palma's *Scarface*. *Scarface* has been troped, sampled and referenced to death in hip-hop: the film's narrative curve turns up on x-amount of gangsta rap LPs (check MC Eiht and Spice 1's albums); there's a Scarface Records in California; a rapper called Scarface; bits of the script appear in records like Public Enemy's 'Welcome to the Terrordome' or Scarface's *Mr Scarface Is Back* LP (killer sample – Al Pacino/Tony Montana's line, "Don't fuck with me!"). Montana exudes the essential qualities that inform the fantasy of the B-boy gangsta persona: over-aggressive, lumpen, money-making crack dealer, ruthless, successful, self-destructive, beyond redemption, going out taking out the competition. *Scarface* is big with crackheads too.

When B-boys make films, they are awful – like Run DMC's 1988 *Tougher than Leather*, a revenge story in which the group sets out to avenge their friend's murder. And they do this for the guy's mum, to whom they give a nice little lump sum at the end. *Tougher than Leather* shows that when Run DMC – who pretty much invented the B-boy persona – make films, they



Couture or consciousness: does 'Fear of a Black Hat' turn revolt into style?

go all folk hero on us, more good guys than GoodFellas. Run DMC recently gave the world Onyx, shaven-headed shouty thug rappers – while at the same time becoming born-again Christians.

Maybe one day a black British B-boy will make a documentary about that group of teenagers who used to gather at Covent Garden every weekend back in the 80s and do hip-hop things – rapping, comparing the latest clothes, body popping, break dancing and spinning on their heads. It could be a road movie like Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*, a node movie like Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, or mode movie like D. A. Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back*. It would be about music, of course, but it would also be about the longstanding love affair between black Britain and African America as it's played out in the traffic of music from the US to the UK.

Hatful of hollow Black middle-class academic-looking film-makers have been suckered by hip-hop's claims to being a legitimate voice of/for sections of America's black disenfranchised (step down Cornell West, Houston Baker and so on). *Fear of a Black Hat* says that the truth of hip-hop is smaller. Beneath the hats and the hollering are more hats and more hollering. Enough emptiness and *ennui* to derail the academic's misapprehensions. Hip-hop resonates when understood in a broad cultural context, say the

theorists. Bollocks, says *Fear*, hip-hop culture is close enough to heavy metal to warrant a film made in the style of *This Is Spinal Tap*.

If Tamra Davis' 1993 rap satire *CB4* was about the pimping of black life, then it doesn't have much in common with *Fear of a Black Hat*, which is a film about the unimportance of difference in the dreams and worlds of rap and metal. Maybe the film makes such knee-scraping narrative obeisance to *This Is Spinal Tap* because it thinks that once you take away the question of race (at best a ruse, at worst a pretension), rappers and metal heads share the same pathologies, neuroses, bad faith and low IQs.

This Is Spinal Tap was a film that made hip the nervous laughter of the culturally defeated and the spiritually challenged. It was funny if you accepted its premise that the counter-culture of the 60s was beaten by its own ineptitude and left a legacy of psycho-social dysfunctionality and atrophied cash-cow forms for media conglomerate pickings. *This Is Spinal Tap* obeyed the cardinal law of parody – only fuck with the dead or the dying or the ought to be dead, and if it ain't dead, go for the parts which have hardened into convention, the less culturally resonant the better. *Fear of a Black Hat* tries to follow this rule, but the kill is not so smooth – hip-hop and the culture of black advancement are alive if in great pain, and the struggle to give this

pain voice is what makes rap interesting and (sometimes) transgressive in a way *Fear of a Black Hat* never is.

I imagine that in America the film will be found funny because hip-hop enjoys the luxury of being able to speak in a number of revealing and seductive ways about African-American life, while at the same time has been (not unproblematically) commodified to great success. Hip-hop also has conventions and contradictions bizarre and complex enough to make the film prescient, if in a surface-skimming way.

But here's where the joke thins out. Hip-hop's gangsta subgenre and the post-*Chronic* worldview could not exist without the half-buried memory of the near-total defeat and denigration of the Civil Rights movement, a memory of shame and humiliation which seems to overshadow an already statutorily half-erased history of post-war racial advancement. Black anger sells records and black anger comes from all the usual suspects – bad housing, bad education, dead-end jobs if any and the retraction of the gains made by the Civil Rights movement to the effect that today 56 per cent of America's black children are born into poverty.

One thing about comedy: when it hits you, you feel no pain Maybe that's why it's easier to make a funny film about the sort of generation that emerges from a defeated political imperative than a film about the legacies of pain and the everyday agonies of that defeat. Pain seems to be rap's most prevalent theme: imposing pain, escaping pain, pain as half-known, half-felt trace of old political betrayals, pain as metaphor and metonym, pain as trope, pain as pathway to pleasure, condition of existence, guarantee of authenticity; suffering as the unbearable norm. Films about hip-hop have a hard time with black pain, which means they're bound to fail because pain is the pulse of hip-hop's angry broken heart.

Hip-hop has its own problems with pain. Representing pain without reducing it to spectacle is a tricky business, and in hip-hop it's an art mastered by none; the sound of suffering appears fleetingly, interstitially, as if by its own volition. Hip-hop has an easier time with rage, pain's first mask and sole vehicle. Mediated and dulled by played-out angry masculinisms, pain remains the province of the rhyme-writer. It is rarely evoked through rap's aural dynamic, which always rests in the affirmative – herd-forming at worst, (real or imagined) community-forming at best. It's not a soundtrack to the mute loneliness of black suffering, of which there will be more in black America as crack and Aids continue to keep undertakers busy.

In 1994, too much hip-hop, cusswords and all, is easy-listening music for cultural hitchhikers and the politically disenfranchised. I guess bullshit detector/party animal films like *Fear of a Black Hat* tell us as much. But if hip-hop is possessed of an intangible that might make it warrant more than the media/cultural studies attention it's currently enjoying, and more emotionally complicated cultural safe bets than *Fear*, then pain is this intangible.

'Fear of a Black Hat' opens on 28 October and is reviewed on page 45 of this issue

● "It's all a question of masks, really; brittle, painted masks. We all wear them as a form of protection; modern life forces us to." Noël Coward, *Design for Living* (1933)

Photographs of the stars – portraits, pin-ups, publicity stills – occupy a curious halfway house between the theatrical and the filmic. And no one was more at the centre of the traffic between British stage and screen than the photographer Angus McBean. From the 30s to the 50s, McBean covered just about every major West End theatre production and shot innumerable actors and artistes (for screen-test portfolios, publicity features, for *Spotlight* and *Plays and Players*). McBean's photography captures a peculiarly British sense of the dramatic, a mixture of reticence and flamboyance, of flummery and playful self-ironising, which shaped the ways in which audiences in the theatres and picture houses saw not only the stars, but also themselves.

British theatre's grip on British film between the wars is often seen as more of a stranglehold than a sisterly embrace. From the early days of woodenly transposing theatrical productions on to celluloid, to that legacy of stilted delivery and clipped accents which lasted well into the 50s, the dependence on stage adaptations, so it is argued, increasingly irritated cinema audiences with their upper-class repertory of Shakespearean condescension. Elevating itself above the upstart movies, British theatre's claim to cultural status as an older, more respectable tradition has conventionally been seen as inhibiting the film industry's sense of its own distinctive artistry.

There are good reasons for challenging this view. Far from being simply snobbish, British theatre between the wars revelled in its entertainment potential. 'The stage' in the West End of London alone referred to a medley of forms – from variety revues, sketches and skits to all kinds of dance, from illusionists, hypnotists, impressionists and ventriloquists to musical comedy and farce. The very idea of the matinee belongs to a new kind of deliberate, post-war pleasure-seeking. And those drawing-room dramas, replete with silk-dressing-gowned lounge lizards toting cigarette holders, were watched in their own day as social realism. In 1924 Sir Gerald du Maurier (the doyen of matinee idols) attacked *The Vortex* as a filthy dustbin



An exhibition of the photographs of Angus McBean, 'Stars in his Eyes', was held this summer at the Museum of Modern Art, Wales, Heol Penrallt, Machynlleth (open Monday to Saturday and Festival Sundays 10am to 4pm)

Christmas card 1982

McBean's Christmas card compositions (up to 800 sent round the world) typically combined the traditional and the personal with good publicity. They usually caught him in the act of photography, as the subject of his own surreal fantasies, as illusionist and puppeteer, or even literally (like a strange pantomime horse) as part of the camera. What might seem the whimsical refusal of modernity in the mise en scène of his photographs is countered by a knowing sense of the past as a collection of props, like the newspaper, the Greek amphorae, the tea and scones. The doll's house or toy theatre is deliberately enclosed in a bell-jar for preserving still-life. If McBean's photographs capture the fantasy of theatre and film as somewhere apparently away from the pressures of the present, they also enjoy reminding us that the make-believe has been artificially arranged.

of a play. Its author, Noël Coward, who was in turn to lambast the angry young men of the late 50s, answered in terms Ken Tynan might have been proud of.

Since the heterogeneous mix of this theatrical world is seldom investigated, its relation to cinema remains an open question. How could the traffic between stage and screen go only one way? Even at its most highbrow, the theatre developed an increasingly photographic dimension to its work – in programmes, in publicity stills for the press, in fan magazines, on posters. At the very least, the age of cinema and of the close-up fostered new notions of performance and direction; in 1935 Olivier's startlingly casual Romeo borrowed from his movie experience.

McBean began working in the 20s as a modeller of masks – very much an inter-war vogue, and one which captures that championing of the shallow as part of a new, youthful resistance to the earnest deadweight of the Victorian past. (Elyot's manifesto in Coward's *Private Lives* declares, "Let's be superficial!") McBean's portraits found ways of popularising that alienated perception of the human face in close-ups

which levelled features to their basic planes and surfaces, while not estranging his viewers (or his subjects) too far. His mask-like faces emphasise the performative aspects of photography, giving a modern twist to the traditional image of the stage actor.

Much of his inventiveness with the camera, its capacity for trickery and fun, his love of visual puns, harks back to the antics of the Edwardian studios with their false backdrops, props and artistic paraphernalia. McBean composed his subjects in photocalls that might last half a day, involve several exposures, painterly retouching and, eventually, scissors and paste. His experiments extended to the texture of the human skin, working on the print's tones and shadows, often homing in on the graininess which television has now made familiar. Nevertheless, his dramatic lighting and careful gloss could preserve the impossible perfection of the star's complexion, hair and eyes.

McBean made his name in the late 30s with a series of surrealist portraits. Leading ladies, models and comediennes – including Flora Robson, Peggy Ashcroft, Dorothy Dickson, Beatrice Lillie ("the outstanding female comic ►

THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF ANGUS McBEAN

MASKS AND FACES

Alison Light on the screen and stage work of a very British surrealist



Audrey Hepburn 1951 Diana Churchill 1939

McBean's series of 'surrealised' portraits became his trademark. Playfully Freudian, with female torsos against phallic columns (a yard of sand delivered to the studio proved impossible to shift and led to many more of these compositions than was originally intended), this appears a tamed Surrealism, lacking the original European anger and menace. Yet when Diana Churchill's disembodied head appeared on the cover of 'Picture Post' under the ironic title of 'How to Photograph a Beauty', below, it was seized by German propaganda (mistakenly thinking her Churchill's daughter) and gave the 'British Journal of Photography' its chance to let loose an attack on McBean as a crank and charlatan. What might seem a mildly misogynist fantasy perhaps also spoke to the difficulty British actresses had in conveying any overt sexual invitation while remaining ladies.

Surrealism found a new home in advertising. Asked to find a pretty girl for a beauty product, Lactocamomile, McBean chanced upon Audrey Hepburn, left, in a chorus line. She typified his preference for the ingenue or the gamine. McBean rarely photographed female stars full length, preferring the sexually innocent look, or the undeveloped: Surrealism allowed him to cut off breasts and hips while punning on the idea of the statuesque. Hepburn's wide-set eyes avoid direct engagement with the camera (which paradoxically makes you more aware of its presence); the surrealist landscape, like the setting of a stage, emphasises that these creations inhabit another world.



Ivor Novello in 'Henry V' 1939

If the 30s was the great age of the portrait photographer, the period also saw the rise of cosmetics and the arrival of the commercial hairdresser. The inter-war years introduced a new acceptability about playing with one's appearance as the British experienced themselves exposed larger than life on screen and poster. Novello, left, epitomises theatre at its least naturalistic. Eye-liner, lipstick, mascara, the gaze towards the stars, the hands crossed against the heart – this is a Henry of romance rather than history, simultaneously an icon of English patriotism, a matinee heart-throb and a consummate poseur. Novello's patronage set 'Angus-boyo' on his road to fame. 'Henry V', however, out of step in this faery-tale version with Europe's more martial temper, flopped.

◀ "genius" of her time, according to Cecil Beaton) – emerge from montages of plaster deserts and driftwood, amidst *objets trouvés*, cotton-wool clouds and Doric ruins, as goddesses, truncated classical busts or even severed heads. Combining the histrionic and the whimsical with a disturbingly modern dislocation, McBean's technical bravura was yet appealing enough to feature in the *Sketch*, where the series was reproduced.

McBean's success reflected the impact of the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition in London (which included Man Ray and Dalí). The British take-up of Surrealism (in the later painting and photography of Paul Nash, for instance) was a complex phenomenon. On the one hand, it could represent a modernist protest, an insistence on the non-mimetic, on the interpretative ambiguity of art and on unconscious association; on the other, its collage of stranded objects might equally signal an aesthetic realm outside the immediate demands of time and place and comfortably beyond the reach of contemporary politics.

The theatricality of McBean's photography faces both these ways: it refuses many of the uses and contexts of photography which excited a Bill Brandt or a John Grierson. McBean resolutely ignores the present and that sense of photography and film's supremacy as the urban, realist medium of modernity. And yet at the same time, his stress on the deliberately artificial and fantastical, even absurd notions of performance and stardom doesn't date. Its romanticism is carefully cerebral and strangely futurist (like the fantasies of Powell and Pressburger) and looks as much forward to the techniques of advertising or video as back to the apron stage.

If McBean's photography is at odds with the moral seriousness and politics of documentary, it also refuses the vigorously heterosexual slant of Hollywood glamour photography. There are few signs of the gorgeous trappings of success and wealth: none of his women wears diamonds or mink, or contemporary evening dress. His actresses are usually in stage costume, stage jewellery, removed from the vulgarity of making money and the sequins, feathers, chiffon and furs fetishised by other photographers. His models are not suggestively posed with that come-on look, as though the



Not McBean: Eugene Robert Richee's portrait of Veronica Lake

essence of eroticism can be found in gazing at the woman's body.

That McBean's photography resists the constant sexual display of the female figure may be motivated by a particular disinterest. For running through his work is what Jack Babuscio in Richard Dyer's *Gays and Film* has called a "gay sensibility", with its four features of camp: irony, theatricality, humour, aestheticism. McBean's puckishness, his love of the androgynous and hermaphroditic, his affection for the affected create the kind of photographic inversions which can make Quentin Crisp more seductive than Mae West. His photographs focus on the kind of gender-bending which has been central, not marginal, to British theatre, and which is arguably at the heart of all drama. Their detachment from purely heterosexual ways of seeing could offer a radical perspective on sexuality.

For McBean's photography is at its most genial and modernist in its love of the inauthentic. The mannered high jinks of the surreal portraits may now seem a parochially British kind of horseplay, but the sense of mummery, of glamour as a matter of play-acting that suffuses the close-up photography seems to extend even to gender itself. It's as though the closer you come to a face, the more sex-appeal (that great commodity of stage and screen) seems merely a matter of the right pose or ges-

ture, of impersonation and imitation, a performance twice nightly. Sex is only skin-deep or cosmetic.

But as Alan Sinfield has argued in *The Wilde Century*, camp can have a class register far from progressive – and never more so than in Britain between the wars. Drawing on the gentlemanly traditions of effete dandyism, the reverence for wit and lovely things which fuelled so many English aesthetes (whether homosexual or not) shaded easily into a lofty disdain for the common herd; it could make a fine art of sneering at the suburban or domestic – a category often identified with women. In McBean's photography, the commercial is always turned into the tasteful; the world that theatre or film refers to can only be signalled by the other arts.

Despite his name, Angus McBean and his antecedents were solidly Welsh. Yet nothing became his roots like the leaving of them. McBean is an awkward recruit for any national platform. (A portrait of Emyln Williams in *The Corn Is Green* is unashamedly romantic and decontextualised.) Like most of the floating population of theatre and film in these years, McBean seems to have been interested in escaping his past, in making a new identity among the *déracinés*. His photographic subjects are equally unlocated. Perhaps the only signs of his origin lie in that distance from the English which so often creates the ideal position from which to understand them (Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* is a recent case in point).

Not surprisingly, McBean's photography didn't cope well with a more egalitarian post-war era of kitchen-sink drama, *cinéma vérité* and colour photography. Though he worked for recording companies and with pop stars (photographing the Beatles for their first LP with EMI), his aesthetic had no room for the demotic. As an arch stylist, his feyness was as outmoded as his sombrero and patterned pyjamas. Never one for too large a slice of life, he returned to the sumptuousness of interior design (including his 20-year-long creation of Elizabethan fantasy in his own home). And, like many a neo-romantic, to capturing a different kind of fading English theatre, in photographs of local Suffolk churches.

With thanks to Alistair C. Layzell and Adrian Woodhouse whose book 'Angus McBean' is published by Quartet Books

Richard Morris 1940

This portrait of an unknown young man, neither star nor model, has all the tenderness missing from McBean's photographs of actors. Although his pose resembles that of a feminine starlet, there is nothing estranged or self-consciously playing with a womanly appearance as in the portraits of Quentin Crisp. It is rare for McBean to show skin touching skin. Elsewhere, the male body is explored in photographs of male dancers, and these, together with his photographs of boys, are among his most affectionate and erotic. Since they are also largely free of camp, ironically they can be viewed as simply straight, like the two-foot close-up teenage girl's pin-up of Cliff Richards in 1955. McBean made the most of the close-up's capacity (without needing the palaver of Surrealism) to remove its subject from history.





Mae West 1948 Olivier as Hamlet 1937

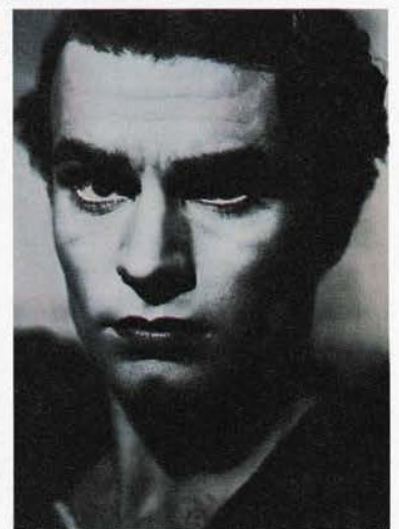
Both these pictures, below, signal how far McBean's distance from heterosexuality depended on playing with its features. His placing of Mae West alongside a doll made in 1934, top, could seem cruel as well as witty: which of the two is the puppet? It seems in keeping, however, with McBean's sensibility that the only out-and-out sex symbol to attract him is herself a theatrical parody, vamping her own sexual image. Unlike the doll, West is fully clothed and not vulnerable—this must be one of the least sexy of her portraits. The doll is one of the many ways in which McBean built in an ironic commentary on his work and a distance from the celebrities he photographed. The female shape is robbed, however amusingly, of both its sexual charge and threat.

Laurence Olivier claimed that he could act masculine or feminine but not neuter. His portrait, bottom, suggests not so much the androgynous (as McBean's female subjects often do) as an attempt at the hermaphroditic: an uneasy fit of both genders. The manly lined brow, the strong jaw and cheekbones, have little of the prettiness of Novello. But the lighting draws the viewer to Olivier's full cupid-bow lips, immaculate hairless skin and the feminine neckline. The made-up face filling the entire frame suggests the theatricality of gender and how much, in European traditions of art, the face signals questions of identity. There is nothing obviously period about this portrait: at once very sensual and full of tension, it perhaps captures too Olivier's own anxiety with the sexual ambiguity of the actor's role. Both photographs imply how much sexuality is a contingent collection of signs which can be differently assembled, travestied, staged—one of the performing arts.



Vivien Leigh 1937

McBean transformed the conventional studio portrait into the kind of dramatic close-up which makes the actor's face an icon. This early picture of Vivien Leigh, above, the key image in the portfolio which won her the part of Scarlett O'Hara, began a long photographic relationship. The lighting and the hat frame the profile and exaggerate the white, matt expanse of the skin; the hair hidden back isolates the face and both emphasises and downplays femininity. As usual unsmiling, the features have been smoothed out to something curiously asexual in their flawlessness; the subject appears both more and less than human, as numinous as a mask. Later photographs dispense with the woman's magazine accessories in order to concentrate on the face alone, removed from the specifics of time and place.



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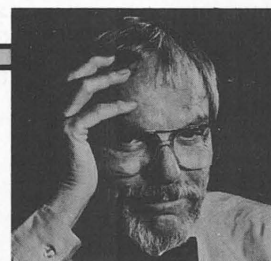
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The visible surface

I read the newspapers every day. I am an inexhaustible reservoir of received opinion, much of it second hand: "Is England strange to us? Chesterton warned that when we are rooted in a place, that place becomes invisible to us..." I live in a place where I know few people. Not far away, the ruins of the greater part of the city's once-famous manufacturing industry have been swept up into big heaps of hardcore and carted away, leaving the site for a 'business park', a Tesco and other retail sheds. The rest of it carries on under the disingenuous banner of 'Rover', producing a largely Japanese car of award-winning mediocrity, the company having been meanwhile sold to BMW, whose chairman, Bernd Pischetsrieder, has declared his enthusiasm for models with "a British identity". There is an echo of technological innovation in the city, in which there remains an unusually large number of well-kept examples of the cars designed for the British Motor Corporation by Alec Issigonis, often in their luxury, badge-engineered variants – the Riley Kestrel, the Wolseley 1800 and so on – possibly originally purchased by workers at the plant and maintained by them in redundancy and retirement as memorials to a future thrown away by a succession of managements intent on 'turning round' the company.

The present-day upheaval of the English landscape is largely undocumented. Will there be any echoes of the battles of Twyford Down in the cinema of the 90s? I doubt it (although Bertrand Tavernier's *Death Watch* already anticipated the mood in 1979). In the same newspaper as the above, further down the page: "the real, underlying grievance, I think, is that we seem condemned to a fiction that takes place indoors..."

When I was a child, my parents and I lived briefly in a hotel on the road between Hexham and Carlisle, outside which a stream of tipper trucks laboured uphill from early morning until late at night, on their way to the Spadeadam MoD range, where the Blue Streak missile base was being built. They were Dodge trucks, like the ones in *Hell Drivers* (1957, a film set on a road-building project, perhaps based on the MI). The base was (and still is, if there is anything of it left) inaccessible, but I have always seen it as the mysterious installation in *Quatermass II* (1957), the definitive film of paranoia in the English landscape, the English *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, never more topical than it is today. There is a car like Quatermass', a Humber, which someone often parks in Wardour Street.

Later, I used to travel a short distance on a bus used by a community of squatters who were still then (in the mid-60s) living in a disused Second World War army camp near Kineton in Warwickshire. I never saw the camp, but there is one like it in *Bang! You're Dead* (1953), a film in which Jack Warner plays a professional poacher. Nowadays, any lonely pair of ornamental gates – to an 'independent' school, perhaps – will rarely fail to evoke the special effects of *Night of the Eagle* (1961), in which Peter Wyngarde plays

Patrick Keiller, director of 'London', explores the everyday landscapes of British cinema, from 'Listen to Britain' to 'Get Carter'

a new arrival on the staff of an isolated educational establishment in which dwells a supernatural horror.

Meanwhile, the view from the train in any town is typically of impoverished domesticity, retailing and ruins. In a landscape from which so much visible economic and other activity has disappeared – exported or vanished into electronic networks – and in which political power and news media are centralised, our direct experience of everyday surroundings is peripheral.

For many people, especially people who work, the world is seen mostly from the interiors of cars and buildings, or through television. Everyday landscapes are the service space for the hardware of invisible electronic communication, the space outside the virtual universe. It is easy to imagine large parts of visible urban and rural space as being outside the conventional boundaries of inhabited space, almost as if they were actually hidden from view, like the space on top of a wardrobe or behind the parapet of a flat roof.

In a way, the cinema is one of the agents of this evacuation – film space is virtual space, more intense, more desirable than everyday surroundings, and most films in the cinemas bring their space from the US or elsewhere, further marginalising experience of the local. In domestic cinema, however, the intensity, the desirability of film space transforms experience of the real thing – Newcastle in *Get Carter*, London in *Blow-Up*.

This essentially poetic phenomenon is not exclusive to the cinema, but the cinema's potential combination of fiction and photogenie makes the most powerful manifestation of it. While we are (if we are) "condemned to a fiction that takes place indoors", the visible surface of present-day Britain remains inexplicable, a solitary distraction between interior destinations. In the cinema, the subject of this solitary distraction was recovered, made public,

committed to memory, revealed in all its strangeness.

If film-making is the construction of other worlds, then film-making on location offers the possibility of the transformation of the world we live in – a reconstruction through poetry or fiction, through photogenie; a fictional politics, a fictional solidarity (Renoir, Jennings). The impulse to search for these locations is irresistible. There is a shot towards the end of *Listen to Britain* in which a military band marches towards the camera along a street I once identified as King Street, Hammersmith (it is actually in Dartford). I find it difficult to visit the north of France without being set off on some ill-informed search for the locations of films – the café near the Belgian border in *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (probably nowhere near the border); the riverbank locations of *L'Atalante*; the clifftop in *Quai des brumes*; the level crossing in *La Bête humaine*; the town in *Le Jour se lève*. The knowledge that, apart from *L'Atalante*, most of these films were made on sets seems to make no difference.

In the late 60s, Thorold Dickinson was teaching at the Slade. Twice a week he presented screenings, usually of two films, which were open to everyone, so that as a student next door, with occasional visits to other venues, it was possible to see an enormous number of films in a short period. I first saw *La Jetée* at the Arts Lab. The film was then only six years old. (It turns out that these Arts Lab screenings were run by David Curtis, later at the Arts Council, which supported my first films in the 80s.) *L'Atalante* was one of the films that Thorold Dickinson showed.

Although the idea of making a film never entered my head until more than ten years later, the memory of these films remained as a glimpse of a utopia, a world in which actually-existing airports, museums, canals, railway stations, streets – the ordinary surroundings of everyday life – were transformed, became part of a changed world.



'Quatermass II': paranoia in the English landscape

Man and mouse

Simon Louvish

Walt in Wonderland: The Silent Films of Walt Disney

Russell Merritt and J. B. Kaufman, Giornate del Cinema Muto/Johns Hopkins University Press, £29.50, 167pp

We know Walt Disney as one of the secular gods of modern corporate America. From the audioanimatronic recesses of his brain, dream images emerged that began as lines on paper and ended up hiding deep in our psyche, overlaying traditional cultures with a distinctive patina of rainbow hills. A dream mouse that conquered America, a dream duck that invaded Chile, and cloned plastic pirates who rattle their robot sabres and gurgle in the theme parks that have taken over the world.

But what this fascinating book reveals is a Disney who is a visitor, not a master, in Wonderland. This is the struggling young artist who began, in Kansas (where else?) in 1921, to carve out, with a small group of colleagues, his own path in the burgeoning world of film animation. Between the poetic and painstaking approach of Windsor McCay and the assembly-line animation of J. R. Bray, Disney and his fellow artists vigorously plumped for the latter, creating a factory which churned out the product for a series of voracious distributors.

It was the battles with distributors, early financial failure and, crucially, the loss of control of his characters to Charles Mintz, producer of the Krazy Kat series, that led Disney at the end of the 20s to break loose, with his most faithful ally, Ubbe Iwwerks, and create his own wholly independent company, owning outright every part of his work. Merritt and Kaufman have delved deep into the business of the art as well as into the art itself, which led from the first Kansas City Laugh-o-Grams to the threshold of Mickey Mouse. They show us genius emerging by trial and error, not in a puff of Aladdin's lamp.

The key conceptual decision, in terms of the animation itself, was the early move towards the conventions of live-action movies in terms of simulated camera angles, cutting and characterisation as against the more static tableaux of Paul Terry, Bray and other rivals. Many Disney characters bore glaring similarities to existing stars such as Krazy Kat and Felix. But Disney veered away from the utter surreality of Krazy Kat's anarchic triangle with Ignatz Mouse and Offissa Pup, and began working on a surreal reality, exemplified by more fluid movement and the melange of farmyard animals that was to metamorphose so powerfully later on. The most overt move in this direction was the development of combined live action and cartoon in the string of Alice shorts.

The authors have painstakingly tracked down the four little girls whose parents were charmed by Disney into giving their services to the cause. But the constraints of weaving cartoon material around live antics eventually led Disney to

phase Alice out. He had already eked out his apprenticeship in sponsored films such as *Tommy Tucker's Tooth* and *Song-o-Reels* and yearned for tougher stuff.

The tougher stuff, and Walt's chosen road to fame, was Oswald the rabbit, who was cruelly snatched at the height of his success by Charles Mintz, along with almost all the Disney company's personnel. But Oswald provided Disney not only with an embryonic mouse (the Disney biology was already mutant), but with another key to the future, the merchandising of characters, rivalling a whole range of Felix the Cat products. Oswald the Milk Chocolate Frappe Bar enabled the Disney cartoons, in the words of *Universal Weekly*, to "have been sold to practically everyone in this territory before they ever reached the screen."

It was sound, attached to Oswald's heir, the Mouse, that eventually broke Disney free from the pack and thrust him towards the pot of gold at the end of the Technicolor rainbow. But the silent Disney revealed by Merritt and Kaufman clearly contains many hidden nuggets. A fascinating example is the mechanical animal, which began in the Alice pictures but was developed in the Oswald films as the Mechanical Cow.

It was Disney's marriage of the modern machine of animation and the bucolic splendour of the vanished barnyard (itself derived, probably, from Paul Terry's *Farmer Alfalfa* and *Aesop's Fables*) that seemed to capture the American dream. An urban America escaped from the noise and scrum of the city to Uncle Walt's animal farm.

Eventually most other animators followed, once the brash city challenge of Fleischer's Betty Boop and Popeye was seen off. But there was much madness, freedom, risk and gaiety along the road. It's a long way from the happy antics of Oswald, Alice and Mickey to the soulless super-digitalised glamour of the latest corporate epic, *The Lion King*. We are definitely not in Kansas any more, Walt. Nor, alas, in Wonderland.

Merritt and Kaufman, working through the Italian publishers Giornate del Cinema Muto, have produced a beautifully illustrated volume containing vintage photographs of the Disney team at work and the live-action crew of the Alice pictures, as well as mouth-watering story continuity sketches and drawings for the Oswald movies. This is the perfect complement to Donald Crafton's wider-ranging work on the silent cartoon, *Before Mickey* (MIT Press). And it prompts the sombre thought that if you desire immortality, you'd better make sure your name is Walt Disney rather than Ubbe Ert Iwwerks.

Last tycoon

Jonathan Coe

Thalberg: The Last Tycoon and the World of MGM Roland Flamini, Andre Deutsch, £17.99, 309pp

There have been some outstanding biographies of the great Hollywood producers published recently. David Thomson's exemplary study of Selznick and Charles Higham's less analytical but scrupulous and intelligent book about Louis B. Mayer, *Merchant of Dreams*, have set a high standard. Irving Thalberg offers, potentially, a more fascinating subject than either of these. Yet

this book, which advertises itself as "At last... the first major biography of Irving Thalberg", is content simply to take the reader on a chatty, somewhat awestruck tour of his short life, and declines to answer any of the larger questions raised by his career.

Its claim to be the first major biography of Thalberg is disingenuous: 25 years ago Bob Thomas' *Thalberg: Life and Legend* covered much the same ground in just as much detail. (Brazenly, it is not even mentioned in Flamini's extensive bibliography.) Flamini's is the better-written book, and is less prone to include lengthy passages of invented dialogue.

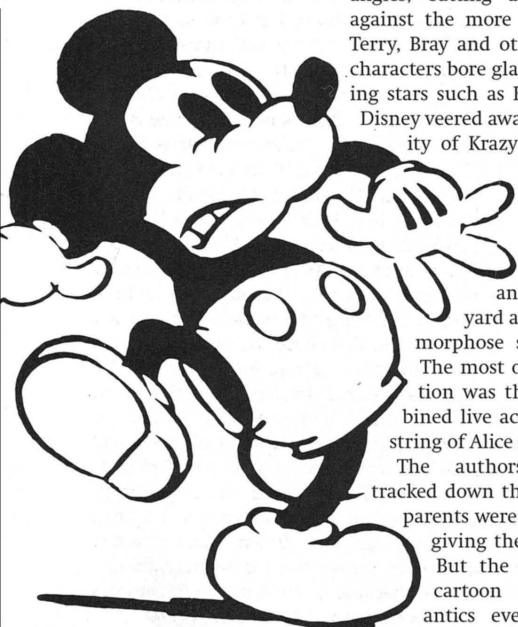
But essentially he gets no closer than Thomas to debunking or dismantling the received ideas by which our perception of Thalberg continues to be plagued: the most potent of these being, first, that he single-handedly tipped the balance of studio power away from the director and towards the producer; and, second, that he pioneered the notion of 'quality' prestige pictures which would add lustre to a studio's reputation even if they did nothing for its bank balance.

On the first of these subjects, Flamini finds it understandably difficult to explain just how the rather frail and sickly Thalberg, at the young age of 22 and with only a couple of years' experience in the film industry, summoned up the resolve to fire Erich von Stroheim from the set of *Merry-Go-Round* (1922), citing as his justification "totally inexcusable and repeated acts of insubordination". Perhaps there's less to this story than meets the eye, anyway: we can simultaneously marvel at Thalberg's amazing strength of personality (not really accounted for in the early biographical details given here) while suspecting that it must only have been a matter of time before some other producer turned up to do the same thing.

The issue of 'quality' cinema is, however, more problematic, especially since the Academy promptly institutionalised the notion by creating the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award in 1937, the year after his premature death. Flamini lays valuable stress on the amount of reading the bedridden Thalberg was obliged to do in his youth, and on his lifelong obsession with the theatre as a primary source of material for the screen.

In this light it becomes ever more obvious that his concept of cinema was reductively literary: who nowadays wouldn't swap *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* for a decent Warner Bros gangster movie, and what self-respecting Marx Brothers fan would prefer the Thalberg-produced *A Night at the Opera* to *Duck Soup*?

This book does, then, give us a distant sense of the timidity and deference which informed Thalberg's judgment of the new medium's possibilities. But as for how this might have connected up with (for instance) his refusal to recognise the scale of the Nazi threat during the 30s, or the reportedly low level of sexual activity in his marriage to Norma Shearer, we are left to speculate. Questions like these would have been the starting point for a more vigorous and committed examination of Thalberg's career than the breezily hagiographic one with which Flamini has for the most part satisfied himself.



Semiotic guerrilla

Stuart Hall

Apocalypse Postponed

Umberto Eco, edited by Robert Lumley,
BFI Publishing, £13.95, 227pp

This volume brings together for the first time in English some of the best of Umberto Eco's 'occasional' cultural criticism. The pieces range from the framing essay of 'Apocalittici e integrati', originally published in 1964, to the wonderful article on the campaign run by the famous porn star Ilona Staller (La Cicciolina) for a seat as deputy in the Italian parliament, which appeared in 1987 in that most sophisticated of Italian weekly magazines, *L'Espresso*.

It is safe to say that Eco has no equivalent in English culture and that it is difficult to imagine one. In Britain, distinguished academic theorists do not usually write weekly newspaper columns about television or comic strips – and if they did, they would have to signal that they were intellectually slumming by making sure that their prose was not sullied by any references to Adorno, the Frankfurt School or semiotic theory. Eco, on the other hand, is not only a distinguished and original semiotic theorist and a scholar of medieval rhetoric who holds a chair at Bologna, and an avant-garde cosmopolitan intellectual, equally at home in the universities of Europe and North and South America. He has also made cultural programmes for RAI television and been a consultant editor to Bompiani, one of the largest Italian publishers. And he has written two successful highbrow novels. He moves confidently with a scholarly and provocative wit between these different worlds, exhibiting no trace of English philistinism.

He once suggested that there were three currents in the criticism of modern "industrial culture", as he calls it: "The Americans have discovered, described and measured, the Continentals also – especially the French and Italians – have theorised, and the British have moralised." Looking back over these essays, it becomes clear that it has always been Eco's project to avoid being contained by any of these currents. Like the Americans, he wants to know how mass culture works. Like the continentals, he is a theorist, though this does not destroy his playful pleasure with the products of mass culture. Like all serious critics, he believes in the "necessity of judgment", but has managed to steer clear of that dull moralism which so disfigures the English scene.

The opening essay, 'Apocalyptic and Integrated Intellectuals', sketches the fine line Eco walks in this critical minefield, between the "apocalyptic critic" who, like the Nietzschean superman, withdraws before the phenomenon of mass culture – "Us two, you and I – the only ones to understand and be saved; the only ones not part of the mass"; and the "integrated critics" who have become instrumental agents of the cultural industries. Eco takes as his heroes not Nietzschean supermen but, in the more cunning sense suggested by Gramsci, "the heroes of nineteenth-century serial novels, like the count of Monte Cristo". The hidden thread of connection he unravels between Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and the comic-strip Superman is the mythic terrain



Under the influence:
Gena Rowlands in 'Faces',
a bundle of unorganised
energies and possibilities

on which modern mass culture operates. Eco, whose writing is full of these abrupt and surprising juxtapositions between 'high' and 'low', occupies this contradictory space *con brio*. For Eco, this world of mass culture "begins with the subordinate classes gaining access to cultural goods and with the possibility of producing these goods industrially." He argues: "If we are to work in and for a world built on human scale", this should not be by adapting man to the *de facto* conditions, but "by using these conditions as the point of departure".

This attitude can be traced in the succeeding essays, whether he is writing about what audiences do to and with television or the world of Charlie Brown, independent radio or Chinese comic strips. Mass culture and its critical theorisation, therefore, do not operate in two separate worlds. They occupy the same, contradictory "point of departure". And since it does not "necessarily produce either one-dimensional man or the blissfully dazed savage of the new global village" – "in different times and places... the same type of communication bombardment may produce either habituation or revolt" – the task of the critic of industrial culture is "to explore the mechanisms further, in order to make their contradictions explode by using alternative approaches, both from within and without."

Apocalypse Postponed allows us to hear, once again, from the inventor of "semiotic guerrilla warfare", in excellent form.

Modern maverick

Jim Hillier

The Films of John Cassavetes:

Pragmatism, Modernism and the Movies

Ray Carney, Cambridge University Press,
£30 (hb), £9.95 (pb), 322pp

Ray Carney's *The Films of John Cassavetes* is an unashamedly polemical study. First, Cassavetes is promoted not merely as a "maverick independent", but "one of the most important artists of the twentieth century", and *Faces* is "one of the supreme works of genius in all of American film". Second, Cassavetes represents a "previously unrecognised form of pragmatic American modernism" in the expressive tradition of Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James. Third, rooting for Cassavetes obliges the author, or so he believes, to reject virtually the whole of Hollywood. Fourth, the widespread critical neglect of

Cassavetes' work apparently necessitates an assault on 'formalist' theory, Marxist critical theory, popular culture studies and virtually all reviewers for their lack of comprehension. Phew!

This is an important book, not least because it offers long-overdue, serious scrutiny of an independent film-maker who poses fundamental challenges to mainstream cinema. It works best when dealing with the troublesome, though rewarding, task of explaining Cassavetes' movies and what makes them appear 'difficult' to most audiences. But however much one may agree that "the ways of knowing that mainstream American movies accustom us to can actually get in the way of appreciating what Cassavetes is offering", characterising Cassavetes should not depend on caricaturing the mainstream.

Carney tends to get caught up in his own (admittedly difficult) propositions. Arguing the difference, for example, between the mainstream conception of character as fixed and easily knowable, and Cassavetes' 'self' as "a bundle of unorganised energies and possibilities", he nevertheless explains Cassavetes' characters in relatively conventional psychological terms. Elsewhere, when he rails against the formalists' absolute distinction between artistic experience and life – since for Cassavetes "art is not in the least a sacrosanct realm set apart from life, with different rules or materials" – he risks losing a sense of Cassavetes as a film-maker at all.

Like the other Cambridge Film Classics, this volume covers only a selection of the director's films. Given that it is significantly longer than previous titles, the discussion of only six of Cassavetes' 11 features is frustrating, especially since no adequate justification is offered for the omission of *Husbands* and *Opening Night*. *Too Late Blues* and *A Child Is Waiting* are dismissed in one line as "studio pictures" and grouped with *Gloria* as the "three weakest works", when they might have offered interesting instances of what happened to Cassavetes inside the system.

Carney has made the most of access to Cassavetes' documents and collaborators, but he gives only a limited sense of the contexts in which he worked. Later US independent feature production owed something to Cassavetes' methods, but little to his idiosyncratic forms. Cassavetes' films lack the political and aesthetic consciousness of European contemporaries such as Godard or Rivette, but, like them, they challenge at the formal level, raising questions about cinematic 'modernism'. In 1968, *Cahiers du cinéma* put Cassavetes alongside Shirley Clarke, Robert Kramer and Andy Warhol; this book mentions other US independent film-makers in passing, but the connection remains unclear and the emphasis on individual, isolated genius works against such a perspective. Elsewhere, references to European directors such as Renoir, and to De Sica and neo-realism, are left unexplored. And on the commerce front, what, for example, did Universal make of *Minnie and Moskowitz*, or Cannon's *Golan and Globus of Love Streams*? Cassavetes never willingly opted to go underground, always aiming at the largest possible audience. In this sense, as Carney recognises, for all his genius – indeed, because of his genius – Cassavetes was always doomed to 'failure'.

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and selected re-releases

The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert

Australia 1994

Director: Stephan Elliott

Certificate
15

Distributor
Rank

Production Company
PolyGram Filmed Entertainment
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Rebel Penfold-Russell

Producers

Al Clark
Michael Hamlyn

Associate Producer
Sue Seary

Production Co-ordinators
Esther Rodewald

2nd Unit:
Grant D. Lee

Production Manager
Sue Seary

Unit Manager/Location Manager
Rick Kornaat

Post-production Supervisor
Sue Seary

Assistant Directors
Stuart Freeman

Emma Schofield

Maria Phillips

Jamie Platt

Casting
Additional:

Faith Martin

& Associates

Broken Hill:

Bobbie Pickup

Quixote Casting

Screenplay
Stephan Elliott

Continuity
Kate Dennis

Director of Photography
Brian J. Breheny

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Martin Turner

Editor
Sue Blainey

Production Designer
Owen Paterson

Art Director
Colin Gibson

Costume Design
Lizzy Gardiner

Tim Chappel

Wardrobe Supervisor
Emily Seresin

Make-up/Hair
Cassie Hanlon

Angela Conte

Strykermeyer

Title Design
Libby Blainey

Music
Guy Gross

Music Director
Anthony Walker

Music Performed by
Sydney Philharmonic

Choir

Soprano Solo:
Robyn Dunn

Songs/Music Extracts
"I've Never Been to Me"

by Ken Kirsch, Ronald

Miller, performed

by Charlene; "Go West"

by Jacques Morali,

Henri Belolo, Victor

Willis, performed by

Village People; "Billy

Don't Be a Hero" by

Mitch Murray, Peter

Callander, performed

by Paper Lace;

"My Baby Loves Lovin'"
by Roger Cook, Roger
Greenaway, performed
by White Plains; "I Love
the Nightlife" by Susan
Hutcheson, Alicia
Bridges, performed
by Alicia Bridges;

"Can't Help Lovin' That
Man" by Jerome Kern,
Oscar Hammerstein II,
performed by Trudy
Richards; "Fernando";
"Mamma Mia" by
Benny Andersson,

Bjorn Ulvaeus, Stig
Anders, performed
by Abba; "I Will
Survive" by Dino
Fekaris, Freddie Perren,
performed by Gloria
Gaynor; "Shake Your
Groove Thing" by Dino
Fekaris, Freddie Perren,

performed by Peaches
& Herb; "A Fine
Romance" by Jerome
Kern, Dorothy Fields,
performed by Ella
Fitzgerald; "I Don't
Care If the Sun Don't
Shine" by Mack David,
performed by Patti
Page; "Finally" by
Rodney K. Jackson,

Ce Ce Peniston, Felipe
Delgado, E. L. Linnear,
performed by Ce Ce
Peniston; "Take a
Letter Maria" by and
performed by
R. B. Greaves; "Save
the Best For Last" by
Wendy Waldman,
Jon Lind, Phil
Galdston, performed
by Vanessa Williams;

"E Strandi ah fors e
lui" by Giuseppe Verdi,
performed by Joan
Carden, the Sydney
Symphony Orchestra
Choreography
Mark White
Additional Sound Design
Guntis Sics
Sound Supervisor
Phil Judd
Sound Co-ordinator
Stephen Erskine
Dialogue Editor
Angus Robertson
Foley Editors
Steve Burgess
Gerry Long
Sound Recordist
Guntis Sics
Sound Mixer
Phil Judd
ADR Recordist
Simon Hewitt
Sound Effects Editor
Stephen "The Gherkin"
Erskine
Drag Consultant
Strykermeyer
Stunt Co-ordinator
Robert Simper

Cast

Terence Stamp

Bernadette

Hugo Weaving

Tick/Mitzi

Guy Pearce

Adam/Felicia

Bill Hunter

Bob

Sarah Chadwick

Marion

Mark Holmes

Benjamin

Julia Cortez
Cynthia
Ken Radley
Frank
Alan Dargin
Aboriginal Man
Rebel Russell
Logowoman
John Casey
Bartender
June Marie Bennett
Shirley
Murray Davies
Miner
Frank Cornelius
Piano Player
Bob Boyce
Petrol Station
Attendant

Leighton Picken
Young Adam
Maria Kmet
Ma
Joseph Kmet
Pa
Daniel Kellie
Young Ralph
Hannah Corbett
Ralph's Sister
Trevor Barrie
Ralph's Father

9,286 feet
103 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Anamorphic

Sydney. Bernadette, a middle-aged transsexual showgirl, is mourning the recent death of her lover. In order to help her get over her loss, her drag queen friend Tick, aka Mitzi, invites her to accompany him on a month's cabaret engagement in Alice Springs. Tick also recruits Adam/Felicia and the threesome set off to their desert location in a violently-painted school bus which they name Priscilla.

It transpires that the resort hotel which they are going to is run by Tick's wife. Bernadette and Felicia are upset that Tick has been so secretive about his past. When they stop off in a small outback town, they are greeted with derision by the locals until they start joking around, and then everyone accepts them. However, the following morning their bus is covered with homophobic graffiti. Later, they break down in the middle of nowhere. Eventually an Aboriginal man turns up and takes them to his settlement, where the trio do their routine. Then a truck arrives driven by Bob, who offers to help. He takes them back to his place and reveals that he was a big fan of Bernadette's old act.

Bob persuades the girls to do their show at the local pub, but they are upstaged by his wife Cynthia, who, much to Bob's embarrassment, has a fascinating act of her own. The following day, Bob drives them back to repair their bus, and ends up travelling with them. They stop off at an underground mining town. Visiting the local bar on his own, Adam is mistaken for a woman, but is beaten up when the truth is revealed. Bob comes to his rescue. He stays on the road with the group, and an attraction seems to be developing between him and Bernadette.

Finally they arrive at Alice Springs.



Desert camp: Hugo Weaving

Tick's wife Marion is happy to see them all and they find that Tick has a young son, Benji, whom Marion would like Tick to look after for a while. Tick, anxious about his son finding out about his new career, tries to act very straight around him. But Benji knows all about his dad and demands to see a much talked-about Abba floor show. Tick takes Benji back to Sydney, leaving Bernadette and Bob behind at the hotel. In Sydney, Benji is in heaven as his dad and Felicia go through their Abba routine.

As Bernadette, Mitzi and Felicia get into their purple-painted wagon, Bernadette says that she wants their conversation to be about more than "penis sizes, wigs, bust sizes and Abba." In the end the road-bound chat fulfils all her worst expectations. But she – and the audience – are meant to love it. This camping holiday movie is a post-Queer, post-'Supermodel' *La Cage aux Folles*. It plays to a mainstream appetite for men in spangles and feathers strutting their stuff to Gloria Gaynor, Village People (heavens, even Wayne and Garth danced to 'YMCA' this year), or doing a darn fine pass for the Abba girls in white satin thigh boots, crocheted berets and lashings of blue eyeliner.

With all this comes the expected salty banter, although in this case it's hardly lewd enough for the average self-disrespecting drag artiste. But then *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert* is an outing for all the family (boasting *Neighbours* and *Home and Away* star Guy Pearce). In this respect, it is similar to *La Cage aux Folles*, which demonstrated to a 70s audience that 'queers' were people you could take home to meet your auntie, who fall in love and have feelings like everyone else. They just know how to have a better time about it. But although in *Priscilla*, Auntie may now swop blusher tips with Mitzi (who sells a line in heavy duty cosmetics for "the woman in us all"), she is not expected to be that finely tuned to the differences between a drag queen and a transsexual. Writer and director Stephan Elliott easily conflates the two – as if, after all, they're all just men in fabulous frocks.

The outfits, extravagant confections of satin and lace, galvanise the film. Dressed up to the nines, the threesome shimmer like tropical fish beached in the desert. The movie's prime joke is for its three suburban sirens to find that it's rough in the outback; in the first town they visit, the women prove more macho than they are, although Bernadette, elegant in twin-set and pearls, is able to drink one liquor-swilling Sheila under the table. The desert also has its charms, as when the Aboriginal man takes them back to his settlement. But from his oblique passing comment ("Nice night for it"), this sequence becomes a little too cute, as the trio belt out 'I Will Survive' for a captive audience. In keeping with the rest of the film, it just pays lip-glossed service to a more complex politics.

Lizzie Francke

Airheads

USA 1994

Director: Michael Lehmann

Certificate
15

Distributor
20th Century Fox

Production Company
20th Century Fox presents an Island World production

Executive Producer
Todd Baker

Producers
Robert Simonds
Mark Burg

Co-producer
Ira Shuman

Production Supervisor
Pam Cornfield-Walker

Unit Production Manager
Ira Shuman

Location Manager
Steve A. Dayan

Assistant Directors
Joe Camp III
Richard Oswald
William Jennings

Casting
Billy Hopkins
Suzanne Smith

Associates:
Jennifer Low Sauer
Kerry Barden

Screenplay
Rich Wilkes

Script Supervisor
Sydney Gilner

Director of Photography
John Schwartzman

Camera Operator
Mitch Dubin

Steadicam Operator
Christopher Haarhoff

Visual Effects
Pacific Data Images

Supervisor:
Jaime Dixon

Producer:
Daniel Chuba

Art Director:
Rebecca Marie

Opticals
Howard A. Anderson Co.

Graphic Design
Casey Kasemeier

Animation
Larry Weiss

Amie Slate

Editor
Stephen Semel

Production Designer
David Nichols

Art Director
Edward McAvoy

Set Design
Larry Hubbs

Robert Fechtman

Set Decorators
Jan Bergstrom
Jerrie Kelter

Set Dressers
Michael Vojvoda
Glenn "Spanky" Roberts

John Cenicer

Quent Schierenberg

Dwain Wilson

Storyboard Artist
M. Anthony Jackson

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Dave Kelsey

Costume Design
Bridget Kelly

Make-up Supervisor:
Deborah LaMia

Denevar

Artist:
Ann Pata

Hair
Candace Neal
Janine Rath

Title Design
Nina Saxon Film Design

Titles
Pacific Title

Music
Carter Burwell

Music Performed by
Kurt Wortman
Neil Stubenhaus
David Torn
Geoffrey Gordon

Music Supervisor
Lonn Friend

Music Editors
Michael T. Ryan
Adam Smalley
Steve McCroskey

Music Co-ordinator
Lia Vollack

Songs
"Born to Raise Hell" by I. Kilmister, performed by Motorhead, Ice-T, Whitfield Crane; "Janie's Got a Gun" by Steven Tyler, Tom Hamilton, performed by Aerosmith; "Don't Hate Me Because I'm Beautiful" by M. Colvin, M. Sonnier Jnr, A. Doss, B. Huggins, performed by Sons of Thunder; "I'll Talk My Way Out of It" by J. Melendez, R. Cantor, performed by Stuttering John; "Baby Huey (Do You Wanna Dance)" by Richard Hell, Don Fleming, Thurston Moore, Steve Shelley, performed by Dim Stars; "No Way Out" by J. Malin, R. Bacchus, H. Pyro, performed by DGeneration; "Wheezing" by and performed by David Byrne; "Bastardizing Jellikit" by Primus, Les Claypool, performed by Primus; "I'm the One" by E. Van Halen, A. Van Halen, M. Anthony, D. Lee Roth, performed by 4 Non Blondes; "Shamrocks and Shenanigans (Boom Shalock Lock Boom)" by L. Dimant, E. Schrody, D. O'Connor, performed by House of Pain; "Feed the Gods" by White Zombie, Rob Zombie, performed by White Zombie; "Can't Give In" by Peter Klett, Candlebox, Kevin Martin, performed by Candlebox; "Rocks" by Bobby Gillespie, Robert Young, Andrew Innes, performed by Primal Scream; "Curious George Blues" by Scott Hackwith, performed by Dig; London" by Morrissey, Johnny Marr, performed by Anthrax; "Unsatisfied" by Paul Westerberg, performed by The Replacements; "Degenerated" by Paul Bakija, Dave Rubenstein, performed by The Lone Rangers; "We Want the Airwaves" by Jeffrey Hyman, John Cummings, Douglas Colvin, performed by The Ramones

Supervising Sound Editors
Jerry Ross
Hamilton Sterling

Dialogue Editors
Bob Newlan
Gordon Davidson
David Kulczycki

Supervising ADR
Kimberly Harris

ADR Editor
Avram Gold

Foley Editors
Mark Papas
Donny Blank

Sound Mixers
Douglas Axtell
Russell C. Fager

Music:
Mike Farrow
Scott Ansel

Sound Re-recorderists
Chris Carpenter
D.M. Hemphill
Bill W. Benton

Sound Effects Editors
John Joseph Thomas
John Edwards-Younger

Stunt Co-ordinator
Ernie Orsatti

Cast
Brendan Fraser
Chazz
Steve Buscemi
Rex
Adam Sandler
Pip
Chris Farley
Wilson
Michael McKean
Milo
Judd Nelson
Jimmie Wing
Ernie Hudson
O'Malley
Amy Locane
Kayla
Nina Siemaszko
Suzzi
Marshall Bell
Carl Mace
Reginald E. Cathey
Marcus
David Arquette
Carter
Michael Richards
Doug Beech
Joe Mantegna
Ian
Michelle Hurst
Yvonne
Allen Covert
Cop

The Lone Rangers, an unsigned Los Angeles rock band, are desperate for a record deal. Lead singer Chazz routinely sneaks into the offices of Palatine Records to try to interest music executives in their demo tape, but he is always summarily ejected. When his girlfriend Kayla kicks him out of her apartment, Chazz moves in with Rex, the band's excitable bass player, and his younger brother Pip, the drummer. Then inspiration strikes: they will hold up their favourite radio station, KPPX, and demand that their demo be played over the air.

Armed with realistic-looking water pistols, the intrepid trio break into the station and descend upon Ian, KPPX's star DJ. Ian tries to humour them, but they are interrupted by Milo, the slimy studio head, and their tape is destroyed in a freak accident. Left with no tape and half a dozen hostages, the band begins negotiating with the police. While the law looks for Kayla, who has the only other copy of the tape, The Lone Rangers make friends with their prisoners, unaware that one of the station employees, Beech, is conducting a one-man rescue operation through the air vents. As news of the hostage situation spreads, an enthusiastic crowd gathers outside, and record company executives start making offers.

Sarah Reinhardt
Secretary
Lexie Bigham
Lydell M. Cheshier
Security Guards
Sam Whipple
Personal Manager
Uri Ryder
Teen
Dana Jackson
Receptionist
Ryan Holihan
Kid
Kurt Loder
Himself
Tlu Leek
Newswoman
Kurek Ashley
Pablo Alvear
Psycho Rockers
Alejandro Quezada
Rockers
Harold Ramis
Chris Moore
China Kantner
Rebecca Donner
Rockers
Vinnie DeRamus
D & D Rocker
Lemmy Von Motorhead
School Newspaper
Rockers
Rich Wilkes
Corduroy Rocker
"Stuttering" John
Melendez
Masturbating Rocker
John Zarchen
Rennie Laurence
Cops
Zander Lehmann
Tyke
Mike Judge
Beavis and
Butt Head Voice
Ben Huggins
Mitchell Dane Sonnier
Monty Colvin
Alan Doss
Robert Cummings
Singers

8,288 feet
92 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
DeLuxe

The police find Kayla and retrieve the tape, but she has a fight with Chazz and smashes the circuit board. Beech ambushes them just as their plastic guns are discovered, inadvertently provoking Chazz with a real gun. When an executive from Palatine infiltrates the station, The Lone Rangers finally sign their contract. Shortly afterwards, their video 'Live and In Prison' is on heavy rotation on MTV. The Lone Rangers start touring in six months - three if they behave.

With his transcendently vicious debut, *Heathers*, Michael Lehmann barrelled onto the film scene as if he were the hipster progeny of John Waters and Edward Albee. *Heathers* wasn't saying anything - the film had no more emotional depth than an episode of *Beverly Hills 90210* - but the baroque bitching of its teenage characters achieved an usually vivid portrait of emptiness. Then he got side-tracked. If *Meet The Applegates*, in which alien insects impersonate a suburban family, was a puzzling follow-up, the Bruce Willis vehicle *Hudson Hawk* was a flop of near-Ishlar proportions. By rights, *Airheads* should have been Lehmann's comeback, but it has fared poorly at the US box office after being shrugged off by the critics. The fact that it is being released after a rather tiring wave of dumb rock-n'-roller movies can't have helped. Neither can the fact that it sports, in Brendan Fraser, a leading man best known for the unedifying *Encino Man* (California Man in the UK).

It's too bad, because *Airheads* is an enjoyable, sweet-natured farce. Lehmann's flair for black comedy may be muzzled here, but at least the film doesn't coast by on pointless parodies of other films. First-time screenwriter Rich Wilkes has a proper grasp of the rock milieu: The Lone Rangers are not very smart, but they have a dim sense of the greater glory of rock which gives their absurd quest internal logic and ultimately a kind of grace. Like hundreds of real bands before them, they honestly believe that playing loud, generic rock music and wearing bandanas constitutes an Important Statement. It's a measure of the believability of the film that when Chazz finally gets his big moment on air, all he has to say is "Rock 'n' Roll!" Wilkes also has an ear for a rock band's self-importance: when Ian asks The Lone Rangers what kind of music they play, they all get defensive about being pigeonholed.

The action, admittedly, is not terribly dynamic. Once our heroes get comfortably ensconced at the radio station, there's really nowhere else for them (or the picture) to go. There are overly theatrical scenes between Chazz and his girlfriend, and a sloppy sub-plot about a militaristic cop, that simply evaporates. But the characters are funny and likeable and the acting is fine - for the double act of rodent-like Steve Buscemi and dazed babe magnet Adam Sandler alone, you don't mind being cooped up with them.

Caren Myers

Bad Boy Bubby

Australia/Italy 1993

Director: Rolf de Heer

Certificate
18

Distributor
Entertainment

Production Companies
Fandango (Rome)/Bubby Pty (Adelaide)

In association with South Australia Film Corporation
With financial assistance from Australian Film Finance Corporation

Producers
Domenico Procacci
Giorgio Draskovic
Rolf de Heer

Associate Producer
David Lightfoot

Production Collaborator
Paul Ammitzboll

Production Co-ordinator
Gina Ploenges

Production Managers
Paul Ammitzboll
Sharon Jackson
Gina Ploenges

Location Manager
Charlie Kroff

Assistant Directors
Paul Ammitzboll
David Wolfe-Barry
Fran O'Donoghue
Geoffrey Knebb

Casting
Audine Leith

Screenplay
Rolf de Heer

Continuity
Carmel Torcasio

Director of Photography
Ian Jones

Cinematographers
Ian Jones
Paul Dalwitz
Kim Waiteklis
Rick Martin
Clive Duncan
Ross Blake
Steve Arnold
David Burr
Gerald Thompson
Richard Michalak
John Chataway
Jeff Morgan
John Ogden
Barry Hellepen
Tibor Hegedis
Paul Ammitzboll
John Armstrong
Ernie Clarke
Brian Bossito
Brigid Costello
Brendan Laville
Lisa Tomasetti
Harry Glynattis
Walter Holt
Geoffrey Simpson
Steve McDonald
Roger Lanser
Simon Cardwell
Richard Rees-Jones
David Popemann
Max Pepper

Optical Effects
Kevin Williams

Editor
Suresh Ayyar

Production Designer
Mark Abbott

Art Director
Tim Nicholls

Costume Design/Wardrobe/Make-up/Hair
Beverly Freeman

Titles
Optical & Graphic

Music
Graham Tardiff

Songs/Music Extract
"Bad Boy Bubby Blues" by Norman Kaye; "If You See Kay" by Peter Monaghan

Sound Design/Supervising Sound Editor
James Currie

Sound Editors
Suresh Ayyah
Julie Chandler

Sound Recordist/Mixer
James Currie

Foley
John Simpson

Technical Advisor
Neville Clark

Stunt Co-ordinator
Richard Boue

Cast
Nicholas Hope
Bubby
Claire Benito
Mom
Ralph Cotterill
Pop
Carmel Johnson
Angel
Sid Brisbane
Yobbo
Nikki Price
Screaming Woman
Norman Kaye
Scientist
Paul Philpot
Paul
Peter Monaghan
Steve
Natalie Carr
Cherie the Salvo
Rachel Huddy
Rachel
Bridget Walters
Angel's Mother
Lilli Birme
Robbed Woman
Aldine Leith
Fondled Salvo
Lucia Mastrantone
Pizza Waitress
Jip de Heer
Treeolpper
James Ammitzboll
Little
Grant Pifo
Salesman
Celine O'Leary
Woman in Mercedes
Dave Flannagan
Cops/Warder
Todd Telford
Little Greg
Paul Simpson
Big Greg
Stephen Smooker
Middle Greg
Mark Brouggy
Mark
James Bonfaio
Young Man
Emma Went
Violinist
Bruce Glebert
Dan
Alan Holy
Michael Habib
Cops
Betty Summer-Lovett
Gayle
Nellie Egan
Vicki
Michael Constantinou
The Animal
Alec Talbot
Prison Superintendent
Michelle O'Regan
Fondled Woman
Gordon Poole
Penniless Drunk
Jamie Niccolai
Number One Fan
Pandy Tsimeculos
Pandy
Marylja Sallis
Marylja
Janet Kanda
Janet
Heather Slattery
Heather
Fille Dusselee
Shannon
Stephanie Cooper
Sharon
Graham Duckett
Angel's Father
Bridget Waters
Angel's Mother

10,249 feet
114 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Anamorphic

At the age of 35, Bubby has never been outside the squalid two-room apartment he shares with Florence, his Mom. She keeps him in a childlike state, feeding him, beating him and having sex with him, telling him the world outside is full of poisonous gas. Wondering how his cat survived there, Bubby wraps it in clingfilm to see if it needs to breathe, and is puzzled by its death. His father Harold shows up dressed as a clergyman, surprised to find he has a son. He treats Bubby with contempt and beats him for copying his own sexual advances to Florence. While the couple are out, Bubby trashes the apartment, and when they come home drunk he suffocates them both with clingfilm.

Taking his dead cat and a gas mask, Bubby ventures into the outside world. He encounters a Salvation Army choir, one of whom introduces him to pizza, then takes him home for sex. The next day Bubby is adopted by a struggling rock band. When they learn he is the 'Clingwrap Killer', they debate turning him in for the reward. But when Bubby holds up a store and returns laden with cash, the band celebrate with a song, 'Bad Boy Bubby Blues', and leave him with an art gallery owner who dresses him stylishly.

In a restaurant Bubby makes advances to a woman and is slung in jail, where he's raped by another prisoner. Released, he returns to his apartment where he adopts the persona of 'Pop', his own father, and having found the band again joins their gig delighting the audience. Youths kill a stray cat Bubby had adopted; taking the corpse to a clinic, he meets Angel, a young nurse looking after retarded patients. They become lovers, but when she takes him to meet her parents they abuse her for being fat; Bubby kills them both. As 'Pop and the Clingwrap Killers', the band scores a cult hit, and Bubby and Angel settle down in suburban bliss with two children and a cat.

Bad Boy Bubby crosses Ted Post's cult psycho thriller *The Baby* with Hal Ashby's *Being There*. Like Post's hero, Bubby has been kept in a state of prolonged infantilism by a predatory mother; and like Chance the gardener in Ashby's film, he's incapable of self-motivation, passively regurgitating whatever's said or done to him and mimicking everyone he meets. Where *Bad Boy Bubby* works best is in outgross-

ing *The Baby* in bad-taste black humour: the hold-up with a dead cat is especially choice. But there's a message to be got over, too, and every so often the film lapses into the sententiousness that marred *Being There*.

From the start, de Heer's take on the blessings of religion isn't hard to deduce. A decapitated crucifix broods over the oozingly squalid cell Bubby shares with his monster Mom: "Jesus can see everything I do and he's going to beat me brainless," Bubby mutters apprehensively. Similar icons adorn the home of Angel's equally deranged though outwardly more respectable parents. "God doesn't like fat people!" her mother shrieks, slapping her. Given all this, we hardly need Norman Kaye, the Aussie cinema's favourite gaunt eccentric, to pop up as a church organist holding forth on the virtues of atheism – and still less a lecture from Paul, the band's lead singer, on how all religions lead to persecution.

The film's best moments are when it simply relaxes into the anomalies of Bubby's collisions with the world. Nicholas Hope, in his feature debut, creates an extraordinary sense of physical immediacy, so that you soon forget that he's acting. Without ever straining for easy pathos he turns Bubby – who might otherwise have come across as no more than an absurdist conceit – into a wholly credible being.

Hope, in other words, trusts his audience. His director, you can't help feeling, doesn't: besides preaching, de Heer is inclined to overplay the incongruities. The prison rape is accompanied by a phalanx of kilted bagpipers – an image altogether too willed to achieve the surrealism it aspires to. The humour's sharper – and more unsettling – when it doesn't try so hard, as when Bubby fronts the band with a rant strung together from fragments of the abuse he's undergone. These replays are seized on as catch phrases by the audience, who happily chorus them back waving suitable fetish objects: gas masks, dog-collars and clingfilm. It's a neat sardonic parody of the artist converting suffering into useful material – and all the more pointed for not being rammed home.

Bubby's production notes make much of its technical innovations as "the first feature film in the world recorded in binaural sound", with microphones built into Nicholas Hope's wig, and also using no less than 31 directors of photography, one for each outside location. The aim was to create, respectively, immediacy and a sense of strangeness. In the event, the sound doesn't do much except make some of the dialogue inaudible, and the cinematography could easily have been the work of one DP with a versatile imagination. It all recalls the abstruse technical challenges Hitchcock used to set himself when faced with dull projects (*Lifeboat*, *Rope*) – absorbing for the filmmaker, largely irrelevant to the audience – and typifies a film that never quite musters the confidence to let the material speak for itself.

Philip Kemp

Brainscan

USA 1994

Director: John Flynn

Certificate

18

Distributor

Guild

Production Company

Coral Productions

Executive Producers

Esther Freifeld

Earl Berman

Andrew Martin

Bob Hayward

Co-executive Producer

Jeffrey Sudzin

Producer

Michael Roy

Associate Producer

Admire Production Ltd

Production Co-ordinator

Kathy Wolf

Production Manager

Huguette Valiquette

Unit Manager

Lucie Bouliane

Location Manager

Pierre Masse

Assistant Directors

Pedro Gandoir

Carole Dubuc

Stéphane Menard

Casting

Joy Todd

Vera Miller

Nadia Rona

Screenplay

Andrew Kevin Walker

Story

Brian Owens

Continuity

France Lachapelle

Director of Photography

François Protat

Blue Screen Photography

John Sullivan

Camera Operator

Jean-Charles Tremblay

Steadicam Operator

Rod Crombie

Visual Effects/Character Design

René Daalder

Video Effects

Tecelene Multimedia

Producer

James Fine

Computer Animation

Aristomenis Tsirbas

Digital Effects/Compositing

Sidley Wright

Motionworks

Designer:

Steve Wright

Producer

Don Miskowich

Compositors

Steve Wright

Michael Rivero

Teddy Yang

Supervisor

Ron Kallsen

Rotoscopers

Lisa Adamson

Susan Widen

Lightning Animation

Chris Casady

Game Entrance Effects

The Post Group

Producer

Jennifer Holstein

Compositor

Peter Sternlicht

Optical Supervisor

Paul Bolger

Domino Digital Effects

Cinema

Research/Digital

Editor

Jay Cassidy

Production Designer

Paola Ridolfi

Scenic Artists

Tristan Tondino

Josianne Brunelle

Special Physical Effects

Ryal Cosgrove

Costume Design

Gaudeline Sauriol

Wardrobe Supervisor

Ginette Magny

Make-up

Marie-Angèle

Peitner Protat

Special Make-up Effects

X.F.X. Ltd

Steve Johnson

Animatronics

Eva Brainard

Design

Norman Cabrera

"Mess"

Design/Sculptor

Mike Smithson

Prosthetics

Adrien Morot

Trickster

Bill Corso

Hairstylist

Johanne Paiement

Title Design

Susan Bradley

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

George S. Clinton

Music Supervisors

Chris Schwartz

David Codikow

Songs

"Under My Skin",

"Roof" by and

performed by

Dandelion;

"A Beginning/

Two of Me", "Freak

Now/Pericynthion"

by Jimmy Plotkin,

performed by Old;

"AFC Theme", "Shapes"

by Ben London,

performed by Alcohol

Funnycar; "Thunder

Kiss '65" by White

Zombie, Rob Zombie,

performed by White

Zombie; "Riverboat"

by John Melendez,

Randy Cantor,

performed by

Stuttering John;

"Triad" by and

performed by

Pitchshifter; "Leave

Me Alone" performed

by The Butthole

Surfers; "Welcome

to this World" by and

performed by Primus;

"Grease Box" by Kurt

Danielson, Tad Doyle,

Josh Sinder, Gary

Thorntenson,

performed by Tad;

"Make It Now" by

and performed by

Mudhoney; "Barely

Human" by and

performed by Wade

Supervising Sound Editor

Dave Hankins

Dialogue Editors

David Beadle

Ron Evans

Barbara Issak

Gary Lewis

Ralph Osborn

ADR Editors

James Hebenstreit

Bruce Michaels

Foley Editor

Albert Lloyd

Sound Mixer

Don Cohen

Foley Mixer

Dean Drabin

Sound Recordists

John Stewart

Ron Ward

ADR Recordist

Joan Chamberlain

Foley Recordist

Ann Hadsell

Sound Re-recordists

Richard Portman

Scott Ganary

Scott Millan

Sound Effects Editors

Peter Bergren

Joe Earle

Bruce Tanis

Foley Artists

Sarah Jacobs

Robin Harlan

Stunt Co-ordinator

Dave McKeown

Armourer

Steve Henry

Cast

Edward Furlong

Michael

Frank Langella

Detective Hayden

T. Ryder Smith

The Trickster

Amy Hargreaves

Kimberly

Jamie Marsh

Kyle

Victor Ertmanis

Martin

David Hemblen

Doctor Fromberg

Vlasta Vrans

Frank

Dom Fiore

Ken

Claire Riley

News Anchor

Tod Fennel

Young Michael

Michele-Barbara Pelletier

Stacie

Dean Hagopian

Mr Keller

Donna Bacalla

Mrs Keller

Jerome Thibiergehan

Mr Tebb

Don Jordan

Cop

Pete White

Dog Owner

Peter Colvey

John

Paul Stewart

Bob

Richard Zemen

Police Officer

Zak

Dog

8,550 feet

95 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Sixteen-year-old Michael Brower, left with a limp after the death of his mother in a car accident, is the introverted school misfit, obsessed with horror films and computer games. With his father away on business for weeks, Michael stays at home peeping into the bedroom of Kimberly, the girl next door. Fromberg, the school principal, bans Michael's horror club and insists any film or game to be shown be viewed by him first.

Kyle, Michael's only friend, passes on word about Brainscan, supposedly a cutting-edge computer game that delivers genuine fear. Michael telephones the company, who send him the first in a series of four discs. Playing, Michael is put in the position of committing a murder, sawing off the victim's foot as a trophy. When he comes round after the game, a real foot is in his fridge and local Detective Hayden is investigating an equivalent murder. The Trickster, malevolent spirit of the game, materialises and tells Michael he must play the other three discs to prevent himself being caught. When he plays the second disc, Michael finds he has murdered Kyle, and the third, which he plays in order to clear evidence, leads to the deaths of Fromberg and a policeman. The Trickster tells him his last victim, with the fourth disc, must be



Get a life: Edward Furlong

which it shares its high school Faust theme, *Brainscan* has the markings of a pre-planned franchise, hooking into the horror subculture with a plot device that hinges on an advert in *Fangoria* magazine and littering its running time with heavy metal and teen in-group talk. The Trickster character is an obvious attempt to devise the sort of continuing monster (complete with cool clothes and cynical wisecracks) that have made successes of the *Elm Street* and *Hellraiser* series. However, this cackling and mysterious games master actually does very little to get worked up about, outside of some body-meld morphing which is remarkably close to effects seen in the latest instalments of those series, as the Trickster swallows Michael's head whole or intertwines with him in a Siamese-twin merger.

After the first murder, a hackneyed bit of subjective camera stalk-and-slash, the film loses interest in straight horror and omits much of its plot in favour of an escalating series of disorienting incidents. Edward Furlong, given a limp and semi-orphan status because he is way too cute to be the geek the script would have him, orders his voice-activated telephone around with proper teenage arrogance, and generally does better than expected as the much-abused hero. There is even one amusingly-handled bit of comic horror as Furlong tries to bury the incriminating severed foot in the woods, only to turn around and find that a large friendly dog has the frozen extremity clamped in his jaws.

Oddly, the most distinctive aspect of *Brainscan* is its ending, at once a variation on the ancient it-was-a-dream cop-out and a genuinely surprising extension of the concept that *Total Recall*, for one, couldn't bear to play out to its logical conclusion. Michael's reaction to a game which really has delivered on its promise to put him through untold fear is entirely credible, as he trashes his high-tech room. The way his fantasies have shaped his cyberspace adventure is neatly demonstrated by the contrast between the game's climax, with Kimberly tearfully declaring love for him, and the real-world resolution as the girl instinctively, but not definitively, refuses to go out with him.

Kim Newman

The Browning Version

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Mike Figgis

Certificate

15

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Percy Main

Producers

Ridley Scott

Mimi Polk

Co-producer

Garth Thomas

Associate Producer

Olivia Stewart

Production Co-ordinator

Samantha Hones

Location Manager

Angus More Gordon

Post-production

Catherine Bunce

Assistant Directors

John Watson

Bernie Bellew

Tommy Gormley

Becky Harris

Casting

Susie Figgis

Screenplay

Ronald Harwood

Based on the play

by Terence Rattigan

Script Supervisor

Libby Barr

Director of Photography

Jean-François Robin

Aerial Photography

Peter Allwork

Camera Operator

2nd Unit:

Malcolm Vinson

Editor

Hervé Schneid

Production Designer

John Beard

Art Director

Lucy Richardson

Set Decorator

Crispian Sallis

Costume Design

Fotini Dimou

Wardrobe Supervisor

Patrick Wheatley

Make-up/Hair

Key:

Lesley Rouvray

Tricia Cameron

Heather Jones

Titles/Opticals

General Screen

Enterprises

Music

Mark Isham

Music Performed by

The London

Metropolitan

Orchestra

Reigate St Mary's

Choir School

Claymore Preparatory

School Choir

Soloist:

Benjamin Moxham

Choir-master:

Peter Newson-Smith

Music Conductor

Ken Kugler

Orchestrations

Ken Kugler

Music Production

Supervisor

Graham Walker

Music Editor

Robin Clarke

Music Co-ordinator

Liz Schrek

Songs/Music Extracts

"Praise my Soul the

King of Heaven";

"Now is the Month

of Maying" by Thomas

Morely; "Galop" by

Jacques Offenbach;

"Tonbridge March"

by Cliff Jones; "The

Browning Beat" by

Red Smith; "Themes

from Gilbert and

Sullivan Operettas";

"Ave Verum"

by Edward Elgar

Dialogue Editor

Mike Crouch

Supervising Sound Editor

Martin Evans

Foley Editor

Budge Tremlett

Sound Mixer

Chris Munro

Re-recording Mixer

John Hayward

Academic Consultants

Peter Broad

Jasper Griffin

Cast

Albert Finney

Andrew Crocker-Harris

Greta Scacchi

Laura Crocker-Harris

Matthew Modine

Frank Hunter

Julian Sands

Tom Gilbert

Michael Gambon

Dr Frobisher

Ben Silverstone

Taplow

James Sturgess

Bryant

Joe Beattie

Wilson

Mark Bolton

Grantham

Tom Havelock

Laughton

Walter Micklethwait

Buller

Jotham Annan

Prince Abakendi

David Lever

David Fletcher

Bruce Myers

Dr Rafferty

Maryam d'Abo

Diana Rafferty

Heathcote Williams

Dr Lake

Oliver Milburn

Trubshaw

Jeff Nuttall

Lord Baxter

Dinah Stabb

Jane Frobisher

Belinda Low

Rowena Baxter

Stephen Mitchelson

Newton

David Pullan

Trimmer

George Harris

Adakendi Senior

Mark Long

Foster

Ingrid Parker

Amanda Kelly

Miranda Rutter

Amelia Cawood

William Slogrove

Marquee Quintet

8,766 feet

97 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Anamorphic

The Abbey School, shortly before the end of term. Andrew Crocker-Harris, the long-serving classics teacher, is standing down because of poor health. He is approached by Taplow, a boy in the Lower Fifth who wants permission to switch from classics to science. Crocker-Harris replies to his request obliquely, but reminds him to turn up in the afternoon for his extra Greek lesson. Crocker-Harris' replacement, Tom Gilbert, sits in on the last class of the 'Croc', or the 'Hitler of the Lower Fifth' - a stern disciplinarian who makes no attempt to be liked.

Later in the day, Taplow turns up at Crocker-Harris' cottage for extra tuition. Here, he runs into science teacher Frank Hunter, who wants to ask about the next term's timetable. As they wait for Crocker-Harris to arrive, Taplow mimics the 'Croc'. Crocker-Harris and Taplow retire to the garden for their lesson. At first, Taplow's fanciful translation of Aeschylus exasperates Crocker-Harris, but the teacher softens as he is reminded of his own teenage years as a brilliant classical scholar.

The headmaster, Dr Frobisher, tells Crocker-Harris that the governors have decided against awarding him a pension. When Crocker-Harris' wife Laura is informed of this, she bitterly attacks her husband. The next morning, she visits Frank Hunter, her lover, and entreats her to spend some of the summer with her; Hunter, guilty in the relationship, reacts coldly.

Sports Day. Dr Frobisher asks Crocker-Harris to forfeit his right as the senior departing teacher to speak last during prize giving. Crocker-Harris meekly agrees to make way for the more charismatic Mr Fletcher. He is approached by Taplow, who presents him with a book - Aeschylus in Robert Browning's translation. He is immensely moved by the gift, but Laura spites him by saying it was merely a bribe. However, Hunter consoles him, insisting that Taplow genuinely cares about him, and also confessing to his affair with Laura. Crocker-Harris tells his wife their marriage is over. The next day, during the prize ceremony, he insists on speaking last. His moving

address, acknowledging that he has failed as a teacher, earns the sympathetic applause of teachers, pupils and governors alike.

In conventional histories of post-war British theatre, Albert Finney and Terence Rattigan exist on opposite sides of a great divide. Indeed, one could go further and say that the reason Rattigan languished in obscurity for so long was precisely because of Finney, Osborne, Richardson and co: in the post-Suez Britain of the 50s and early 60s, the days of the Royal Court and Free Cinema, Rattigan was regarded as a quaint old war-horse of the stage - class-bound, affected, too metropolitan for contemporary tastes.

The divisions have long since become blurred. These days, Rattigan is no more and no less ripe for revival than Wesker or Osborne, and Finney, as senior statesman of stage and screen, doesn't seem so very different from the actor-knights who went before him. It still comes as a surprise, though, to see the star of *Saturday Night*, *Sunday Morning* cast as Crocker-Harris in *The Browning Version*: it's a bit like seeing Marlon Brando play drawing-room comedy.

Finney makes a doleful, sonorous classics teacher, but, for all the pathos he squeezes out of the part, he is too sturdy and monolithic a figure to seem especially tortured by his plight. He lacks the febrile, anguished quality that Michael Redgrave brought to the role in the 1951 Anthony Asquith screen adaptation. Writing about that film, the critic Jeffrey Richards observed that it derived "much of its force from Rattigan's exploration of emotional repression, of the world of incompatibility, deceit and loathing that was all a part of his own experience in the homosexual demi-monde of fashionable and theatrical London." This isn't a world that Finney manages, or even tries, to hint at. As his frustrated wife, Laura, Greta Scacchi offers infinitely the more dynamic performance, combining bitterness, lust and sadness in equal measure.

In terms of recent British cinema, ►



Stiff upper lips in the Lower Fifth: Finney, Scacchi

◀ this latest version can perhaps best be seen as the third part of a triptych. The story of a repressed, middle-aged Englishman thawing out his long-frozen emotions, it follows the same trajectory as *The Remains of the Day* and *Shadowlands*. It is an exercise in mannered restraint, not least for the filmmakers themselves. Producer Ridley Scott and director Mike Figgis eschew their usual visual flamboyance. Here, they're beholden to script and locations. The picture, shot at Sherborne in Dorset, boasts its fair quota of cobbled streets, ancient abbeys, musty classrooms and thatched cottages.

Its most jarring and confusing aspect is the way it welds past and present together. Although ostensibly updated to the present day, there's little in the look of the film that would be out of place in the 50s or even earlier. Teachers may mention computers, but there is no sign of them. The preferred means of transport is the bicycle. The English cricket team is referred to as the MCC, and the cult of the gentleman amateur, judging from Fletcher – the nice-but-dim teacher who bats with improbable, Lara-like flair in the end-of-term match – is alive and well. The myths and rituals of the English public school are celebrated rather than debunked. Education is still a matter of cricket, classics and ragging in the dorm. Furthermore, it's a boys only affair.

Ronald Harwood's adaptation tweaks events here and there, and skilfully opens out what was originally a one-act, one-set play. It adds an irrelevant sub-plot about the strained relations between the Sixth Form and the Lower Fifth ("I hear your mother is a really good fuck," bullying prefect Trubshaw taunts Taplow in the showers – hardly dialogue you could imagine Rattigan writing). And, like the Asquith version, it depicts Crocker-Harris' prize-giving speech instead of simply referring to it, thereby buying itself a big emotional climax. This is a perfectly sturdy piece of work, but it lacks any discernible attitude toward the material. Harwood fails to communicate what makes *The Browning Version* relevant to 1994, or to chart any of the social or political changes since it was first performed in 1948.

Rather than pondering the reasons behind this remake, it is probably best to sit back and enjoy the character performances. From Robert Donat and Will Hay onward, British actors have always had a knack for playing school masters: Michael Gambon's venial head and Julian Sands' ingenuous new language teacher follow in the tradition. Matthew Modine is brisk and sympathetic as the American science teacher with whom Laura has an affair, and the child actors are also proficient. In the end, though, these consolations are scarcely enough. One can't help returning to the question of why the film was made if neither director, scriptwriter nor star had anything new to add to the innumerable *Browning Versions* that have gone before it.

Geoffrey Macnab

The Client

USA 1994

Director: Joel Schumacher

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros
In association with
Regency Enterprises
Alcor Films

Producers

Arnon Milchan
Steven Reuther

Co-producer

Mary McLagen

Associate Producer

Guy Ferland

Production Supervisor

Cydney Bernard

Production Co-ordinator

Kris Nielsen

Unit Production Manager

Mary McLagen

Location Manager

Scott Elias

Assistant Directors

Yudi Bennett

Daniel Silverberg

Pamela S. Kuri

Casting

Mali Finn

Associate:

Emily Schweber

Memphis:

Jo Doster

Screenplay

Akiva Goldsman

Robert Getchell

Based on the novel

by John Grisham

Script Supervisor

Nancy Hopton

Director of Photography

Tony Pierce-Roberts

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Robert Wagner

Aerial Photography

Stan McLain

Camera Operator

David M. Dunlap

Steadicam Operator

Bob Gorelick

Opticals

Pacific Title

Editor

Robert Brown

Production Designer

Bruno Rubco

Art Director

P. Michael Johnston

Set Design

Marco Rubco

Kevin Cross

Set Decorator

Anne D. McCulley

Set Dressers

Joseph Timothy

Conway

Tom Gilbert

David Weathers

Illustrator

Tim Flattery

Scenic Artist

Michael Zansky

Special Effects

Co ordinator

Larry Fioritto

Special Effects

Wes Mattox

Costume Design

Ingrid Ferrin

Costume Supervisor

Mayes C. Rubco

Make-up

David Craig Forrest

Lydia Milars

Special Make-up Effects

Randy Westgate

Joe Montelongo

Hairstylists

Marie-Ange Ripka

Rita Parillo

Title Design

Pittard/Sullivan/

Fitzgerald

Music/Music Conductor/

Orchestrations

Howard Shore

Music Editor

Ellen Segal

Songs

"Heartbreak Hotel"

by Mae Axton, Tommy

Durden, Elvis Presley,

performed by Steve

Tyrell; "St Louis Blues"

by William C. Handy,

performed by

Preservation Hall Jazz

Band of New Orleans;

"Bourbon Street

Parade" by Paul

Barbarin, performed

by Jimmy Maxwell

and his Orchestra;

"She Said" by Maek

Kazanoff, performed

by The Tri-Saxual

Soul Champs

Supervising Sound Editors

Charles L. Campbell

Donald J. Malouf

Sound Editors

Lou Edemann

Chuck Neely

Nils Jensen

Lenny Geschke

Gary Mundheim

Larry Carow

ADR Supervisor

Larry Singer

ADR Editor

Andrea Horta

Sound Mixers

Petur Hliddal

Music:

John Richards

ADR Mixers

Christina Tucker

Evelyn Hokanson

Foley Mixer

Mary Jo Lang

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Chris Jenkins

Mark Smith

Adam Jenkins

Foley

John Roesch

Artist:

Hilda Hodges

Technical Adviser

Mike Cody

Stunt Co-ordinators

Gloria Fioramonti

Rick Barker

Cast

Susan Sarandon

Reggie Love

Tommy Lee Jones

Roy Foltrigg

Mary-Louise Parker

Dianne Sway

Anthony LaPaglia

Barry Muldano

J.T. Walsh

McThune

Anthony Edwards

Clint Von Hooser

Brad Renfro

Mark Sway

Will Patton

Sergeant Hardy

Bradley Whitford

Thomas Fink

Anthony Heald

Trumann

Kim Coates

Paul Gronke

Kimberly Scott

Doreen

David Speck

Ricky Sway

William H. Macy

Dr Greenway

Ossie Davis

Harry Roosevelt

Nicole Mercurio

Mama Love

William Sanderson

Wally Boxx

Walter Olkewicz

Romey Clifford

Amy Hathaway

Karen

Jo Harvey Allen

Claudette

Ron Dean

Johnny Sulari

William Richert

Harry Bono

Will Zahm

Gill Beale

Mark Cabus

Detective Nassar

Dan Castellana

Slick Moeller

John Diehl

Jack Nance

Tom Kagy

Wheelchair Patient

Alex Coleman

Linn Beck Sittler

Stephanie Weaver

Todd Demers

Newscastrs

Ashtyn Tyler

Amber

Ruby Wilson

Receptionist

Andy Stahl

Agent Scherriff

Ronnie Landry

Waiter at Antoine's

Jeffrey Ford

Bailiff

Macon McCalman

Ballatine

Michael Detroit

Jail Medic

John Fink

Lieutenant

Mimmye Goode

Night Nurse

Robert Hatchett

Paramedic

Connie Florence

Telda

Sandra Bray

Yvonne Sanders

Norm Woodel

Karen Walker

Reporters

Rebecca Jernigan

Emergency Nurse

Tommy Cresswell

FBI Agent

Nat Robinson

Special Agent Boch

Mary McCusker

Pretty Girl

Bettina Rose

Woman at Desire

Joey Hadley

Michael Sanders

Officers

Angelo R. Sales

Orderly

Christopher Gray

Jesse L. Dunlap

Security Guards

Joe Kent

Elvis Impersonator

Robbie Billings

Ballentine's Wife

John Mason

Robert H. Williams

Darrell D. Johnson

Musicians

Mark Pyles

Helicopter Pilot

Clay Lacy

Jet Pilot

Gerry Loew

Anthony C. Hall

Pizza Men

George Klein

Announcer

10,854 feet

121 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor

Anamorphic

Memphis. In the woods, 11-year-old Mark Sway and his younger brother Ricky surprise a man who is attempting suicide by piping in his car exhaust. The man traps Mark in his car and explains that he is Romey Clifford, defence attorney of Mafia hitman Barry

mother-son bonding.

A chief element of the suspense here is the deployment of Mafia heavies, but sadly, these are more than stereotypical Italianate thugs. It is as if the filmmakers conceive villainy as projections of Mark's adolescent imagination, one presumably nourished on a diet of too many TV movies and too little Coppola and Scorsese. These incompetently scampering cartoon figures remain too thinly characterised to be threatening; their pursuit of Mark delivers only some perfunctory chase sequences and Muldano's climactic confrontation with Reggie Love is simply ridiculous.

Tommy Lee Jones' Federal Attorney, 'Reverend' Roy – so called because of his habit of quoting the scriptures in court – further lowers the tension. Jones plays him in alternating registers of preening, media-hungry vanity and a sleek intimidation that only takes off in a confrontation with Sarandon: 'Miss a step,' he whispers, his face pressed up against hers, 'and I'll eat you alive.' But one can't avoid the feeling of an actor coasting on a minimal deployment of his considerable skills. This becomes especially evident during Roy and Mark's first meeting; Jones generates the most interest by playing on the contrast between his physical presence, with all its bull-necked menace, and his delicate manipulation of a dainty little carton of milk. Equally, Jones has fun with his character's vanity, checking out his best side for the TV crews, making sure he has the right pancake for the lights, and, wouldn't you know it, almost turning into a real softie for Mark's final leave-taking scene. However, there is a nice touch here: when Sarandon straightens Jones' tie before he meets the press, he looks both alarmed and surprised; a woman has recognised his essential narcissism but with a certain mocking tenderness.

If Jones' performance is marked by its extended cameo qualities, Sarandon comes across as more committed to her character. Reggie Love and Mark are the focus of the film to such an extent that Mark's brother's coma appears less the horrifying after-effect of misadventure than a narrative convenience. Equally, Mark's mother is sidelined, occasionally being pulled out from the margins either to unleash a screaming fit or simply to reinforce the good mother/bad mother opposition that the film sets up between her and Love.

Smoking and single parenthood, loaded items in the American PC agenda, get treated in *The Client* with a curious legerdemain, a sense of lesser and greater 'evils' being juggled – Love, the divorced, ex-alcoholic mother and Mark, the surrogate son, bond over a shared cigarette – and it is a pity the film did not restrict itself to just these two rich subjects. But in having to contend with the film's uninspired thriller elements, they succeed only in delivering a climax that revels in sentimentality rather than in emotions that have really been earned.

Chris Darke

8 Seconds

USA 1994

Director: John G. Avildsen

Certificate

PG
Distributor
First Independent
Production Company
New Line Productions
presents
A Jersey Films
production
Executive Producers
Cyd LeVin
Jeffrey Swab

Producer

Michael Shambeg
Co-producer
Tony Mark
Production Executive
Leon Dudevoir
Production Supervisor
Eric McLeod
Production Co-ordinator
Pearl A. Lucero
Unit Production Manager
Tony Mark

Location Manager

Michael R. Casey

Post-production Supervisor

Sara King

Executive in Charge of Post-production

Joe Fineman

Assistant Directors

Clifford C. Coleman
Scott Metcalfe

Casting

Caro Jones

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Monte Merrick

Script Supervisor

Helen Caldwell

Director of Photography

Victor Hammer

Camera Operators

Ken Lamkin
Ralph Watson
Peter D. Roome

Steadicam Operator

Randy Nolen

Special Optical Effects

Sony Pictures High
Definition Center

Editor

J. Douglas Seelig

Production Designer

William J. Cassidy

Art Director

John Frick

Set Decorator

Jenny C. Patrick

Set Dressers

Michael Leonard
Mike Kocurek
Adam Braid
Elizabeth Jane
McNamara

Scenic Artists

Cole Lewis
John Helton

Bull Replica

Tiger Baker

Special Effects

Co-ordinator
Bart Dion

Special Effects

Bill Wynn
Dennis Dion

Costume Design

Deena Appel

Costume Supervisor

Tangi Crawford

Make-up

Desne J. Holland

Hairstylist

Doreen Vantyne

Title Design

Intralink Film &
Graphics

End Montage:

The Post Group

Additional Titles/Opticals

Title House

Music

Bill Conti

Executive Music Supervisors

Kathy Nelson
Tony Brown

Music Supervisors

Dawn Soler
Toby Emmerich

Songs/Music Extracts

"Burnin' Up the Road"

by Terry McBride, Bill
Carter, Ruth Ellsworth,
performed by John
Anderson; "Texas is
Bigger Than It Used
to Be" by Ronnie
Rogers, Mark Wright,
Joe Johnston,
performed by Mark
Chesnutt; "Just Once"

by David Lee Murphy,
Kim Tribble,
performed by David
Lee Murphy; "Pull
Your Hat Down Tight"

by Lewis Storey,
performed by Pam
Tillis; "Standing Right
Next to Me" by Karla
Bonoff, Wendy
Waldman, performed
by Karla Bonoff;
"When Will I Be
Loved" by Phil Everly,
performed by Vince
Gill, Karla Bonoff;
"No More Cryin'"

by Josh Leo, Terry
McBride, performed
by McBride & the Ride;
"Ride 'em High, Ride
'em Low" by Ronnie
Dunn, performed by
Brooks & Dunn; "You
Hung the Moon" by
Patty Smyth, Kevin
Savitar, performed by
Patty Smyth; "If I Had
Only Known" by Craig
Morris, Jana Stanfield,
performed by Reba
McEntire; "Once in a
While" by Steve Dorff,
John Bettis, performed
by Billy Dean

Choreography

Mark Sellers

Dialogue Editors

Jim Brookshire
Cathy Speakman
Craig Clark
Allan Schultz

Supervising ADR Editors

Steven D. Williams
Joe Mayer

ADR Editors

Cathy Speakman
Michael Goodman

Sound Mixer

Michael Scott
Goldblum

ADR Mixer

Jeff Vaughn

ADR Recordist

Robert Guastini

Foley Mixer

Tom Gonta

Sound Re-recordists

Ken Teaney
William Fresh
Tony Sereno

Sound Effects Editors

David Farmer
Ann Scibelli

Foley Artists

Joe Sabella
Joanie Rowe

Stunt Co-ordinator

Mike McGaughy

Bulldozing Instructor

Gary Leffew

Animal Wrangler

Bill Watson



Last of the lusty men: Stephen Baldwin

Cast

Luke Perry
Lane Frost

Stephen Baldwin
Tuff Hedeman

James Rebhorn
Clyde Frost

Red Mitchell
Cody Lambert

Ronnie Claire Edwards
Himself

Linden Ashby
Martin Hudson

Cynthia Geary
Kellie Frost

Cameron Finley
Young Lane

Carrie Snodgrass
Elsie Frost

Dustin Mayfield
Teenage Lane

Clyde Frost
Elsie Frost

Ed Kutts
Couple

Gabriel Folse
Joe Stevens

Amariillo Cowboys
Clint Burke

Travis
John Swasey

Drunk Cowboy
Jim Gough

Official Nacogdoches
Mike Hammes

Police Officer
Jonathan Joss

Medic Del Rio
Danny Spear

Kellie's Father
Paul Alexander

TV Reporter
Daniel Ramos

Bartender
George Michael
Himself

Tonie Perensky
Coquina Dunn

Buckle Bunnies
Renee Zell Weger

Prescott Motel Buckle
Bunny

John Growney
Himself

Ed Kutts
Boyd Polhamus

Hadley Barrett
Rodeo Announcers

Kix Brooks
Ronnie Dunn

Troy Lee Klontz
Barry Francis Lederer

James Henry Gunn
Tommy Greywolf

Daniel James Milliner
Daniel Lee McBride

Brooks & Dunn
Terry McBride

Ray Herndon
Billy Thomas

Gary Morse
Jeff Roach

McBride & The Ride
Vince Gill

Karla Bonoff
Kenny Edwards

Michael G. Botts
J.D. Martin

The Vince Gill &
Karla Bonoff Band

9,428 feet

105 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Prints by

Film House

to the disapproval of his taciturn father.

With the help of his friends, Lane recovers and after riding Red Rock, a reputedly unbreakable bull, he goes on to regain the championship and win back Kelly's love. But at the height of his success, Lane is crushed to death in the ring. A year later, Tuff dedicates his championship win to Lane.

8 Seconds is little more than a vehicle for television star Luke Perry, a teen favourite from *Beverly Hills 90210*. It's not his debut – he had a supporting role in the sparky but dumb *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* – but it is his first major part and, on this evidence, he will be lucky to get another.

The opening titles try to sell the movie as a restatement of Western mythology: "The old West may be dead, but its spirit lives on". The trailer-park, ten-gallon rodeo culture that is the story's focus has proved a rich source of material in the past in films such as Nicholas Ray's *The Lusty Men* and Sam Peckinpah's *Junior Bonner*, which tap into the rodeo star's fixation with a mythology of transient fame; but 8 Seconds' treatment of it is so relentlessly superficial that it emerges as a debased and hollow version of the original Hollywood dreamscape. It come as no surprise that the inspiration for 8 Seconds was a television sports item about Lane Frost's life, but what might have been an insight into a unique corner of American culture has here turned into a TV movie-style pot-boiler complete with soggy script and perfunctory performances. Perry is not the worst offender – he's game, though sorely limited in range. That privilege is reserved for *Northern Exposure*'s Cynthia Geary, who as Frost's wife gives an embarrassingly wooden rendition of what is already a cipher of a part.

The presence of Stephen Baldwin is a partially redeeming feature. The third member, with Alec and William, of the Baldwin acting clan, his gormless physiognomy enlivens the character role of Tuff Hedeman, who has most of the decent lines and a number of fist fights and drunken rages along the way. Rocky director John Avildsen skilfully captures the golden sunscapes and bull-riding action, but even his finesse cannot rescue what is fundamentally a flawed conception.

Andrew Pulver

Elles n'oublient pas (Love in the Strangest Way)

France 1994

Director: Christopher Frank

Certificate
15

Distributor
Gala Films

Production Companies
Fildebroc/TF1 Films
Production/Capac/
Ice Film
In association with
Canal +

Executive Producer
Jean Nachbaur

Producer/Associate
Producer
Michelle de Broca
Production Associate
Paul Claudon
Production Manager
Eric Dussart
Assistant Directors
Catherine Charlot
Brice Cauvin
Casting
Hélène Bernardin
Screenplay
Christopher Frank
Screenplay Collaboration
Jean Nachbaur
Based on an original
suggestion by Jean-
Marc Roberts
Script Supervisor
Nathalie Vierny
Director of Photography
Bertrand Chattry
Camera Operator
Bruno Privat
Editor
Catherine Dubeau
Production Designer
Dominique André
Set Decorators
Thierry Carini
Claude Potier
Jean-Yves Mabillet
Laurent Devaux
Abdellah Aid
Bruno Dalimer
Costume Design
Yvette Frank
Make-up
Didier Lavergne
Hairstylist
Christine Leauistic
Music
Jean-Marie Senia
Piano Solo Performed by
Jean-Marie Senia
Music Conductor
Jean-Luc Podio
Orchestrations
Jean-Marie Senia

Music Supervisor
Frédéric Jaqmin
Song
"I Don't Know" by
and performed by
Nadia Fares
Sound
Daniel Brisseau
Sound Mixers
Jean-Paul Loublier
Michèle Neny
Sound Effects
Pascal Chauvin

Cast
Thierry Lhermitte
Julien Bernier
Maruschka Detmers
Anne Bernier
Nadia Fares
Angela Galli
Patrick Timsit
Darrès
Umberto Orsini
Vienne
Johann Martel
Charles
Vincent Planchais
Jim
Bernard Freyd
Douchène
Marie-Christine Adam
Le Guennec
Patrick Floersheim
Moretti
Marina Rodriguez Tome
Ariane
Alain Frérot
Sarret
Georges Stiatidis
Phil
Margarida Marinho
Dan
Jean-Claude Vogel
Boy at Bowling Alley
Charlotte Clamens
Nurse
Alain Hocine
Parking Attendant
Claudine Delvaux
Voice on Phone
Gisèle Tourret
Douchène's Secretary

9,614 feet
107 minutes

In colour
Subtitles



Breaking down the walls of heartache: Thierry Lhermitte

Then Angela herself turns up in response to an ad and is hired by Anne to look after Charles. Julien is perturbed to discover she has moved into the flat below. He bungles a confrontation with her, incriminating himself. After a bitter scene with Anne, Julien inveigles Angela to a penthouse he is buying and turns on her. As they struggle, the story emerges of how Julien's company has hounded her lover Marc Cipriano to death's door. Julien hits Angela too hard and drops her body into a shaft. He returns to find a workman plastering up the opening.

The Berniers move into the penthouse but bicker incessantly. Julien is set up by an elderly Italian claiming to be Angela's husband. When Anne accuses him of prolonging the affair with Angela, Julien tells her the truth and hacks open the wall. There is no corpse. Anne concludes he is unbalanced and leaves him. He is summoned to his boss's office where Angela, in a neck brace, testifies that Julien has abused his position in order to victimise her. All the evidence points against him and he is ignominiously sacked. As he packs his belongings he sees Angela at her usual place outside the café. Looking straight up at him, she removes her brace and shakes out her hair.

Most immediately striking about *Love in the Strangest Way* is its plotline, virtually identical to that of *Fatal Attraction*: an affluent businessman indulges in a casual fling with a stray woman while his wife and child are absent but finds the consequences immeasurably more catastrophic than could ever be imagined. The similarity is not coincidental. Director Christopher Frank, a novelist and script-writer who died of a heart attack on the day before editing started, was also something of a cinephile. The intention was to exploit 'family-in-danger' prototypes and take some of their conventions for a spin.

Despite a great deal of eye-contact, there isn't much (if any) sex in this film, only the withholding of it. What's more tangible is materialism: possessions, status, power. Julien's family lives in a comfortable apartment with well-stocked shelves and fridge and the latest hardware; they aspire to a house on the coast. As we're constantly reminded, they live directly off other

people's misfortunes. Julien works for a debt-collection agency with a veneer of business respectability but his minions resort to ringing debtors' neighbours in the middle of the night to coerce them into paying up. Meanwhile, instability is rife. Julien's friend Serge, a property speculator suffering the combined effects of recession and a disintegrating marriage, offers him a magnificent penthouse overlooking the Eiffel Tower at a knockdown price.

Into this scenario comes Angela who represents the underside of Julien's professional and domestic complacency. Blasé and obsessive, predatory and preyed on in turn, she inhabits a sleazy world of broken, drifting relationships. Visiting his flat, she has more in common with his seven-year-old son's tastes in video and music. She intrudes on the homestead, fingering clothes, photographs, breaking things (glasses, the rocking horse), contaminating private territory with her smoking and her footprints, and ends up, supposedly, a mouldering corpse built into their new living-room wall.

The implication is that Angela takes fitting moral vengeance on Julien, turning his own devious methods against him. This is no warning about occasional moral laxity but a fully-fledged invective against greed. Angela is both angel and harpidan; her constant exercising belies her vulnerability and the punch she delivers sends Julien reeling. Anne's violence, too, as she stabs a pre-packed meal for the microwave, has its counterpart in Angela's full-frontal assault on Julien, and there's a perverse complicity between the two main female roles which recalls the film's original French title - 'They Don't Forget'.

For all the turmoil, there's a deadpan quality about the way the film is put together. From the skilful scattering of clues, to the cracking pace, fatalistic editing patterns and abrupt scene-changes to the suspenseful scoring, which draws heavily on Bernard Herrmann, it teeters on the verge of self-parody. Finally, the film's appeal has less to do with the compulsive horror of *Fatal Attraction* and more, albeit without quite the same flair, with Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques*. What counts are stylish twists and turns of plot, double-takes, illusory alliances and fiendishly faked murders.

Jo Comino

L'Enfer

France 1993

Director: Claude Chabrol

Certificate
15

Distributor
Mayfair Entertainment

Production Company
MK2 Productions
SA/CED
Productions/France 3
Cinéma/Cinéma
With the participation
of Canal +

Producer
Martin Karmitz

Production Manager
Yvon Crenn

Assistant Director
Cécile Maistre

Screenplay
Henri-Georges Clouzot

Screenplay
Collaboration/Dialogue
José-André Lacour
Adaptation/Dialogue
Claude Chabrol

Script Supervisor
Aurore Chabrol

Director of Photography
Bernard Zitzermann

Editor
Monique Fardoulis

Art Director
Emile Ghigo

Set Decorators
Denis Seiglan
Claire Amoureux-
Nicole
Jean-François Corneille
Bernard Camus
Marc Barroyer
Frédéric Bersani
Pierre Galliard
Claude Vincent

Costume Design
Corinne Jorj

Make-up/Hair Stylists
Marie Lastenet-
Fournier
Stéphanie Lemaire
Jean-Pierre Berroyer

Music
Matthieu Chabrol
Songs/Music Extracts
"Les couleurs du
temps" by Guy Béart;
"L'enfer de mes nuits"
by Bill Baxter,
performed by La
Belle Equipe; "Cello
Concerto op.104"
by Anton Dvorak,
performed by
M. Rostropovich

Sound
Jean-Bernard
Thomasson

Sound Design
Dominique Dalmaso

Sound Effects
André Naudin
Gadou Naudin

Stunt Co-ordinator
Michel Thiriet

Cast
Emmanuelle Béart
Nelly
François Cluzet
Paul Prieur
Nathalie Cardone
Marylin
André Wilms
Doctor Arnoux
Marc Lavoine
Martineau
Christiane Minazzoli
Mme Vernon
Dora Doll
Mme Chabert
Mario David
Duhamel
Jean-Pierre Cassel
M. Vernon
Sophie Artur
Clothilde
Thomas Chabrol
Julien
Noel Simsolo
M. Chabert
Yves Verhoeven
Young Boy
Amaya Antolin
Mariette
Jean-Claude Barbier
M. Pinoiseau
Claire de Beaumont
Mme Rudemont
Pierre-François Dumeniaud
M. Lenoir
René Gouzenne
M. Ballandieu
Marie-Thérèse Izar
Mme Pinoiseau
Dominique Jambert
Young Woman
Louis de Léotoing d'Anjony
Vincent
Jérôme le Paulmier
La Flèche
Vincent Mangado
Young Man
Françoise Meyrueils
Plump Woman
Laurent Nasset
Little Boy at the Café
Catherine Tacha
Mme Point

9,286 feet
103 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Subtitles

In south-west France, while supervising the building of his country hotel, Paul Prieur meets Nelly, a beautiful young woman. They fall in love, marry and have a son, Vincent. The hotel prospers and for some years the couple are idyllically happy. But gradually Paul starts to detect discrepancies in Nelly's accounts of where she's been and what she's been doing, and comes to suspect her of having an affair with Martineau, the local *garagiste*.

Paul takes to following Nelly into town. Catching him at it, she is initially amused and even flattered by his jealousy. But after seeing Nelly and Martineau water-skiing together, Paul goes missing for hours, and on returning

hurls wild accusations at his wife. Protesting her innocence, she bans Martineau from the hotel and promises never to go into town again. Paul's jealousy only increases, and he begins to suffer from hallucinations. During a film show organised by Duhamel, an elderly guest at the hotel, Paul screams insults at Nelly and hits her. The guests start to check out.

One evening, during a power cut, Paul becomes convinced Nelly is having sex with every man in the hotel, both staff and guests. He beats and rapes her. When she visits the local doctor, Dr Arnoux, Paul follows her and insists she is mad. Talking ambiguously about a stay in a clinic, Arnoux sends them both back to the hotel to await an ambulance the next morning. During the night, Paul, believing Nelly is plotting against him, ties her to the bed. In the bathroom he falls and hits his head. He thinks he has untied Nelly, and imagines slitting his own throat. As dawn breaks Nelly is still tied up, while Paul gazes bleakly out of the window.

A mix of sex, food and violence, simmered in the pressure-cooker of French provincial claustrophobia, has furnished some of Chabrol's best films – *Le Boucher*, to look no further. So a study of psychotic marital jealousy set in a gourmet Auvergnat hotel should in theory have provided ideal material. If this time the dish seems disappointingly underdone, it's maybe because the chef is working to a recipe not his own. The script of *L'Enfer* was originally written by Henri-Georges Clouzot, director of *The Wages of Fear* and *Les Diaboliques*, who started shooting it in 1964, but suffered a heart attack and had to abandon the project. Chabrol, while keeping "the main framework" of Clouzot's screenplay, has "brushed it up a lot" and updated the action to the present, "lightly modernising the dialogue".

On balance, he might have been wiser to leave it in period. Set in 1964 in the depths of the provinces, the plot might have just about passed muster; but that an intelligent young woman

of today would stick with an increasingly deranged husband, meekly submitting to his whims, strains belief past the limit. Emmanuelle Béart, perhaps uneasily aware of the credibility gap, rather overdoes the innocent girlish frolics. François Cluzet (Dexter Gordon's French minder in Tavernier's *Round Midnight*) is well cast as the paranoid Paul – even at his most relaxed there's a nervous tension about his neck muscles – but he too by the end is reduced to desperate mugging as the plot falls away beneath his feet.

Yet to begin with, *L'Enfer* promises well. Chabrol has always had the knack of injecting small notes of disquiet into seemingly placid situations, and the first half of the film abounds in off-hand, off-key details: giggles in a darkened room, warplanes soaring high overhead, a video store displaying a poster, "Les Infidèles". There's one weirdly unsettling moment while Paul is tracking his wife through the streets of the town: as he passes the open doors of a cathedral, a wedding procession suddenly swoops at him out of the darkness. We even get a hint that his state of mind may be deliberately drug-induced: "I'm the queen of sleeping-pills," announces Nelly, blithely dosing her insomniac husband from a well-stocked drawer.

Some at least of these intimations ought to pay off in due course. Were this pure Clouzot, a fiendish scam would be revealed, with Nelly, say, plotting to destroy Paul in cahoots with the fatherly Dr Arnoux. Were it Chabrol on good form, we could expect some violent emotional catharsis, blood dappling the *haute cuisine*. Instead *L'Enfer* flounders, stumbles and in the end falls abjectly apart. Paul ties Nelly up or he doesn't, he slits his own throat or he doesn't, switching in and out of hallucinations till we neither know nor care what's true. As a bleak dawn breaks, the title comes up – "SANS FIN". Paul, we're to understand, is trapped in an endless hell of his own devising. But there's a more literal interpretation: that the film simply lacks an ending. More's the pity, when it started so well.

Philip Kemp



Hell is other people: Emmanuelle Béart

Fear of a Black Hat

USA 1992

Director: Rusty Cundieff

Certificate

18

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Oakwood Films

In association with

ITC Entertainment

Group

Executive Producer

Wm. Christopher

Gorog

Producer

Darin Scott

Executive in Charge of Production

Guy J. Louthan

Executive in Charge of Development

Stacy Kramer

Line Producer

Neil C. Lundell

Production Co-ordinator

Lynne Goldhammer

Location Manager

Pamela d'Pella

Post-production Director

Linda A. Borgeson

Post-production Co-ordinator

Christine Griswold

Assistant Directors

Rachel Williams

Lindsey Elizabeth Lee

Elena Robinson

Jonathan Oliver

Casting

Jaki Brown

Kimberly Hardin

Story

Rusty Cundieff

Script Supervisors

Jesse H. Long

Paul Bowers

Dawn Gilliam

Director of Photography

John Demps Jnr

Camera Operator

Dianne Farrington

Editor

Karen Horn

Associate Editor

Theo Waddell

Production Designer

Stuart Blatt

Set Decorator

Penny Barrett

Set Painters

Jeremy Wakefield

Stephen Roche

Special Effects

Kevin McCarthy

Sandra McCarthy

Costume Design

Rita McGhee

Wardrobe Supervisor

Barabara Chennault

Make-up/Hairstylist

Stacye Branche

Titles/Opticals

Mercer Titles &

Optical Effects

Additional Music

Jim Manzie

Music Supervisor

Larry Robinson

Music Editor

Jay Bolton

Record Scratcher

Pierre Jaboin

Songs/Music Extracts

"Mayo n' Pierre's" by

Pierre Jaboin, Scott

Mayo: "Come Pet

the P.U.S.S.Y.", "My

Peanuts", "A Gangsta's

Life Ain't Fun", "Booty

Juice", "I'm Just

a Human" by Rusty

Cundieff, Larry

Robinson; "Fuck the

Security Guards",

"I'm Gonna Kick Yo

Black Ass", "Buried

and Bald (Wear Yo

Hat)", "Grab Yo Stuff",

(A/K/A "Grab Yo Dick")

by Rusty Cundieff,

John Bautista;

"Guerrillas in the

Midst" by Rusty

Cundieff, John

Bautista, Darin Scott;

"Do that Shit" by

Larry Robinson

Music Video

Producer:

Martin C. Jones

Co-ordinator:

Kerry B. Bailey

Assistant Directors:

Gregory M. Alexander

Bertha Lynn

G. Thomas Furgerson

Joyce Lewis Demps

Choreographer:

Jimmy Locust

Supervising Sound Editor

Hari Ryatt

ADR Editor

Sarah Brady

ADR Mixer

Brian Harman

Foley Editor

Doug Reed

Sound Recordists

Eric Hoeschen

Bryan Gladstone

Sound Re-recordist Mixers

John Brasher

Andy Napell

Sound Effects

Adriane Marfiak

Dialogue Editors

Lauren Stephens

Bryan Azorsky

Foley Artist

Doug Reed

Stunt Co-ordinator

Steve Lambert

Cast

Mark Christopher

Lawrence

Tone Def

Larry B. Scott

Tasty-Taste

Rusty Cundieff

Ice Cold

Kasi Lemmons

Nina Blackburn

Howie Gold

Guy Friesch

G. Smokey Campbell

Backstage Manger #1

Bob Mardis

Promoter #1

Brad Sanders

Promoter #2

im Hutchinson

Reggie Clay

Moon Jones

Faizon

Deezer D

Jam Boys

Darin Scott

Security Head

Devin Kamienny

Vanilla Sherbet

Jeff Burr

Chicago Cop

Kenneth J. Hall

John Liggert

Don Reed

Daryll in Charge

Reggie Bruce

Video Director

Shabaka

Geoffrey Lennox

Kurt Loder

Kurt Loder

Mark Selinger

Right Winger

Lamont Johnson

MC Slammer

JJ Hommel

White Punk #1

Jeff Pollack

White Punk #2

Monica Toller

Fine Woman Back

Stage

Laverne Anderson

Sage

K Front

Parsley

Deborah Swisher

Rosemary

Doug McHenry

Promoter Doug

George Jackson

Promoter George

Lance Crouther

Street Vendor

Doug Starks

Rev Brother Pastor

Deacon Dr Doug

Nancy Giles

Loreatha

Penny Johnson

Re-Re

Billy Elmer

Security Guard #1

Joseph Anthony Farris

Security Guard #2

Darryl Savid

Teacher

Rosemarie Jackson

Cheryl C.

Barry Heins

Marty Rabinow

Eric Lanouville

Mike Spingleton

Clyde Jones

Rico

Rochelle Ashana

Tiffini

Homeselle Joy

Mabel Ann Jackson

7,920 feet

88 minutes

In colour

Dolby stereo

Film director Nina Blackburn has just completed her documentary on rap group NWH, *Niggaz With Hats*. As she reminisces, we return backstage before a show where members Ice Cold, Tasty-Taste and Tone Def explain the concept behind their outsize hats. Their rivals The Jam Boys argue with them over who will headline. Nina interviews them about their new album *Guerrillas in the Mist*, and on a video channel, Kurt Loder reports controversy over the title. Interviewed, the group state their intransigence, but then defer to their manager.

Newsreel shows platinum sales for the record and the group on the cover of *Newsweek* and *Billboard* magazines. They are denounced by right-wing senators and preachers alike. Nina interviews each of the newly wealthy group in their new surroundings. Tasty-Taste shows her around his garden and displays his gun collection. Leaving the house Taste is pulled over by security guards who pin him to the ground; the incident becomes the subject of NWH's new video. NWH are invited to talk on the theme of Rappers Against Violence at a local school with long time rivals The Jam Boys, and a fight breaks out.

Cheryl C., Taste's new girlfriend, pushes him to ask for more money; arguments ensue within the group. In a hotel, Taste finds Cheryl in bed with Ice Cold. Everyone pulls their guns and the band's new manager is accidentally shot. NWH split up and each of them goes solo. But on finding themselves billed below their rivals at a show, the band members decide to reform.

Produced in 1992 but released here a year after Tamra Davis' weak rap satire *CB4*, Rusty Cundieff's writing and directing debut quickly becomes predictable. Promoted as a parody of the archetypal West Coast gangsta group NWA, the film is more ambitious than this suggests, sniping vaguely at pop nationalism – Public Enemy's album *Fear of A Black Planet* (hence the title), Da Lench Mob's album *Guerrillas in the Mist* – as well as such diverse targets as PM Dawn, John Singleton, *New Jack City*, Run DMC and

◀ 2 Live Crew. As those titles suggest, though, *Black Hat*'s musical moments are never anything but parasitically obvious. There is never any sense of why anyone would enjoy any of these groups or why better music would make for a stronger parody.

Cundieff's target is videogenic rap – how hip-hop looks on MTV. He is good on the channel's image repertoire, picking up on the Pucci Buddha swirls of a PM Dawn set, and the claustrophobically underlit interiors of the 'Guerillas' video, even including the director's credits in the corner of the frame, MTV-style. In fact, he is interested less in specific types of rap than in deflating the discursive strategies and photo-opportunities through which NWH justify their awful records.

As documentarist Nina, Kasi Lemmons starts off bright and eager, her interview technique gradually becoming more pointed and her smile more weary as she comes to realise NWH are a pack of morons. It is a surprise, therefore, when the closing titles reveal that Nina marries Ice Cold, as if the escalating stupidity of each episode has somehow drawn her into romance. Cundieff plays Cold as a roly-poly Benny Hill, an eye-popping doughboy and an absurd reduction of the messianic roles so many rappers adopt. Slaves were forced to work in the sun without hats, Cold carefully explains – therefore the group wears huge Dr. Seuss hats to remember this degraded past. While the band's name parodies NWA (Niggaz with Attitude), this interpretation captures both militant and Afrocentric rap's *faux*-historicist strategies, also catching the fiercely emphatic tone of the genre's pedagogic hubris. The joke is that NWH's programmatically hare-brained zeal should excuse but only ends up emphasising every pragmatically gross whim they have, whether that is Ice Cold proclaiming his manifesto 'F.Y.M. (Fuck Y'all Motherfuckers)' or Larry B. Scott's wolfish Tasty-Taste losing himself in a convoluted exposition of their video 'Booty Juice'. It's a neat gag – the mind contorting itself over the body's drives – but then it is the only one Cundieff knows.

His only way out of this locked groove is to introduce Cheryl C., a standard-order gold-digger who manipulates Tasty-Taste into leaving the group. Here the film finally succumbs to a misogyny it has flirted with throughout. An early scene in which NWH overreact to a gay dance instructor has a homophobic glee to it that is similarly hard to take. Cundieff thinks he has fearlessly revealed gangsta rap as a theatrical fraud, militant rap as a masquerade; but from 1985's *Krush Groove* onwards, parodies of rap groups have been the norm, rather than the outrageous exception. Imagine a film which, like Godard's *One on One*, never strayed from the studio, which meditated on the glass screen and the mixing desk and took the formal implications of hip-hop seriously in order to criticise it more emphatically. Now that really would be funny.

Kodwo Eshun

Funny Man

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Simon Sprackling

Certificate

18

Distributor

Feature Film Company

Production Company

Nomad Pictures

Executive Producers

Gareth Wiley

Steve Parsons

Producer

Nigel Odell

Co-producers

Tim James

David Redman

Production Manager

Vicki Harvey-Piper

Assistant Directors

Tony Duckett

Sabia Hall

Denise Hill

Screenplay

Simon Sprackling

Script Supervisor

Jane Barnwell

Director of Photography

Tom Ingle Jnr

2nd Unit Camera Operators

John Hoare

Steve Banks

Steadicam Operator

Vince McGahon

Editor

Ryan L. Driscoll

Production Designer

David Endley

Supervising Art Director

Catriona Maclean

Art Director

Adam Deschamps

Special Effects

Neill Gorton

Jim Francis

Video:

Michael Elfton

Andrew Wood

Matte:

Steve Begg

Costume Design

Alex Westover

Make-up/Hair

Robert Frampton

Bettina Graham

Title Design

John Goodinson

Titles/Opticals

Cine Image

Music

Parsons/Haines

Songs

"Wild Card" by

Parsons, Haines,

performed by Jimi Lash

& the A Bandits;

"Sacrifice of Love" by

and performed by

David Lloyd; "Rock

'n' Roll Heaven"; "One

Moment of Glory"

by Parsons, Haines,

Sprackling, performed

by Matt Devitt; "Sexy

Time" by Parsons,

Haines, performed by

Tim James; "Funny

Man" by Parsons,

Haines, James,

Sprackling, performed

When Max Taylor, a brash young music producer, wins Callum Chance's ancestral home in a game of poker, he takes the family along for a visit. He also gets his younger brother Johnny – a failed guitarist with a minibus – to transport some of his belongings. Much taken by the magnificence of the building and its bizarre games room, Max and his wife settle down for a night of cocaine-enhanced sex. Meanwhile their young son Harry is killed by a strange, Punch-faced jester, Funny Man. Later, while Max listens to some

by Nothing to Write

Home About

Sound Editors

Dominick Scherrer

Paul Parsons

Dialogue/ADR Editor

Bradley Mason

Foley Editor

Richard Flynn

Sound Recordist

Patrick Boland

Sound Re-recordists

Peter Maxwell

Foley Artists

Dianne Greaves

Pauline Bennion

Roy Baker

Cast

Tim James

Funny Man

Christopher Lee

Callum Chance

Benny Young

Max Taylor

Matthew Devitt

Johnny Taylor

Pauline Black

Psychic Commando

Ingrid Lacey

Tina Taylor

Chris Walker

Hard Man

George Morton

Crap Puppeteer

Rhona Cameron

Thelma Fudd

Harry Heard

Harry Taylor

Jamie Heard

Jamie Taylor

Bob Sessions

Ed Bishop

John Chancer

Card Players

Jana Sheldon

Nurse

Barnaby North

Waiter

Steve Wright

Radio 1FM DJ

8,345 feet

93 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor



Haemoglobin goblin: Tim James

demo tapes and snorts more coke, his wife and daughter are also brutally killed.

By the time Johnny arrives with four hitchhikers (including Senga, a West Indian tarot reader, and Thelma, an amateur ornithologist), there is no sign of Max or his family. Johnny and his companions decide to split up in order to find them, but they are picked off one by one. Only Senga, who is sensitive to the evil forces at play, puts up any resistance, but even she dies when Funny Man erupts from within her body. Before being shot into the sky, Johnny finds a note implying that Max deliberately sabotaged his chances of joining the Rolling Stones.

In a hospital for the insane, a nurse chastises Mr Chance for not playing cards with anyone but himself. As she leaves his cell, we see Max Taylor sitting naked and bloodied, in the middle of Chance's ancestral home.

"Freddie's dead, long live The Funny Man." With its confident opening, granted the genuine gravitas only a horror icon like Christopher Lee can deliver, *Funny Man* almost carries off this publicity conceit. A highly stylised poker game, the battered minibus winding its way to the haunted house, our introduction to the anti-hero – all augur well for an original British horror film in the tradition of *Death Line* or *The Wicker Man*.

A plausible villain for the 90s, Funny Man draws on Punch and Judy malevolence and end-of-the-pier vulgarity to give his opening murders an appropriately lurid streak of haemoglobin humour. Unfortunately, once Max's family have been factored, the gruesome killings just go on without any discernable plot structure emerging. Each murder thus becomes a comic sketch with a punch line more out of *Viz* than Bosch or Poe. Some of the jokes succeed, such as the decapitated head awaiting horrified discovery, only

to be mistaken for a 35-yard free kick. Others – Thelma the bird-spotter failing to duck when her brain is shot out from behind – are too laboured.

There are times when the film's visual allegiances appear pledged more to early Ultravox pop videos than any specific movie models. But other hearteningly familiar references reflect writer/director Simon Sprackling's video rental habits. The motley minibus group recall the vanload of victims delivered to Leatherface in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Thelma is a dead ringer for her counterpart in *Scooby Doo* – complete with acrylic polo neck, bobbed hair and glasses.

The best moments are the set-piece slayings of the hitchhikers, which perfectly evoke a familiar mood in anyone who has wandered lost and bored through a seaside resort or a fun fair. But these are not incorporated into any wider context. Neither are the genre nods towards other keynote films. Thus, when Max's neglected games-loving son Harry runs along corridors like the boy in *The Shining*, audiences may think that he could become an unwitting ally for Funny Man against his coke-snorting parents. Instead, he is dragged off dead with the feeble payoff line: "I always think kids should be tucked in early before getting down to some fun."

The film's most telling missed opportunity is its failure to set up any sense of conflict. There is no source given for Funny Man's wide-ranging powers or his malice, and no indication given of any vulnerability. None of the protagonists has a chance of surviving, so there is very little suspense to be gained from familiarity with their characters. These misgivings aside, the film might well achieve a cult status simply through being the first authentic hooligan horror. It's resolutely British and seemingly made for a vindaloo and lager audience.

Farrah Anwar

Geronimo An American Legend

USA 1994

Director: Walter Hill

Certificate

12

Distributor

Columbia TriStar

Production Company

Columbia Pictures Corporation

Executive Producer

Michael S. Glick

Producers

Walter Hill

Neil Canton

Production Supervisor

Michelle Wright

Production Co-ordinator

Sandra Maltz

Unit Production Manager

Michael S. Glick

Location Manager

Greg Lazarro

2nd Unit Director

Allan Graf

Assistant Directors

Josh McLaglen

Douglas A. Raine

J. Tom Archuleta

Xochi Blymyer

Casting

Rueben Cannon

Screenplay

John Milius

Larry Gross

Story

John Milius

Script Supervisor

Paula Barrett

Director of Photography

Lloyd Ahern

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Michel D. O'Shea

Camera Operator

Robert LaBonge

Norman G. Langley

Edward Morey III

2nd Unit:

Bob Bergdahl

Editors

Freeman Davies

Carmel Davies

Donn Aron

Production Designer

Joe Alves

Art Director

Scott Ritenour

Set Decorator

Richard C. Goddard

Storyboard Artist

Raymond G. Prado

Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Larry Cavanaugh

Special Effects

R. Bruce Steinheimer

Casey Cavanaugh

Jeffrey Knott

2nd Unit:

David Fletcher

Sean Cavanaugh

Costume Design

Dan Moore

Costume Supervisors

Colby Bart

Barry Kellogg

Make-up

Key:

Gary Liddiard

Dennis Liddiard

Manlio Rocchetti

Fred C. Blau Jr

2nd Unit:

Werner Keppler

René Lafaurie

Hair stylist

Key:

Peter Tothpal

Chris Lee

Alicia M. Tripi

Titles/Opticals

Hollywood Title

Service/Pacific Title

Music

Ry Cooder

Period Brass Band Music

Performed by

The Americus

Brass Band

Music Editor

Bunny K. Andrews

Song Extract

"Deal Gently with thy

Servants, Lord"

performed by the

Boston Camerata,

the Schola Cantorum

of Boston

Choreography

Desmond F. Strobel

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Chris Carpenter

D.M. Hemphill

Bill W. Benton

Production Mixer

Lee Orloff

ADR Group

L.A. Mad Dogs

Consultants

Native American

Consultants:

Sonny Skyhawk

Leland Michael Darrow

Apache Dialect

Supervisor:

Michael Minjarez

Stunt Co-ordinator

Allan Graf

Cast

Jason Patric

Lt. Charles Gatewood

Gene Hackman

Brig. Gen. George

Crook

Robert Duvall

Al Sieber

Wes Studi

Geronimo

Matt Damon

Lt. Britton Davis

Rodney A. Grant

Mangas

Kevin Tighe

Brig. Gen. Nelson Miles

Steve Reavis

Chato

Carlos Palomino

Sgt. Turkey

Victor Aaron

Ulzana

Stuart Proud Eagle Grant

Sgt. Dutchy

Stephen McHattie

Schoonover

John Finn

Capt. Hentig

Lee de Broux

City Marshall Hawkins

Rino Thunder

Old Nana

Hoke Howell

Billy Pickett

Richard Martin Jr

Apache Medicine Man

J. Young

Hawkins' Deputy

Raleigh Wilson

Yaqui Dave

Jackie Old Coyote

Apache Vision Woman

Monty Bass

Dead Shot

Pato Hoffman

The Dreamer

Scott Crabbe

Courier at Ball

Patricia Pretzinger

Woman at Ball

Roger Callard

Sgt. Mulrey

Juddson Keith Linn

Bronco Apache

Mark Boone Junior

Affraid Miner

M.C. Gainey

Unafraid Miner

Michael Rood

Chaplain

Michael Minjarez

Dandy Jim

Burnette Bennett

Skip-Hey

Davina Smith

Dead Shot's Wife

Jonathan Ward

C.S. Fly

Luis Contreras

Rurale Officer

Jaquelin Lee

Apache Woman

Jim Manygoats

Ailing Apache

Scott Wilson

Redondo

Eva Larson

Cantina Waitress

Greg Goossen

Sonny Skyhawk

Michel Adams

Walter Robles

Anthony Schmidt

Schoonover Gang

Jim Beaver

Proclamation Officer

10,347 feet

115 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Technicolor

Anamorphic

The latest in the crop of post-*Dances With Wolves* Westerns has nothing new to say; white men speak with forked tongues and Indians are treated shamefully. The shadow of *Ulzana's Raid* falls heavily over the film, but where Robert Aldrich adopted a deeply ironic view of the struggle between two cultures, the aim here is simply to embellish the myth. The phrase 'An American Legend' in the title is a telling pointer. It allows the co-option of the real Geronimo into a patriotic scheme of things in which he represents all that is best and most enduring in the American spirit. It's an idea wholly in keeping with the consistently heroic themes in scriptwriter John Milius' work, in which great Americans do not so much represent society as violently define themselves in opposition to its dominant values.

Like Sean Connery's Arab chieftain in *The Wind and the Lion*, Patrick Swayze's guerilla leader in *Red Dawn* and Nick Nolte's renegade sailor in *Farewell to the King*, Wes Studi's Geronimo is a warrior who lives according to his own heroic code. Milius filters praise for these warriors through the device of an admiring secondary character. *Farewell to the King* had Nigel Havers' sensitive British officer; *Red Dawn* a thoughtful Cuban Colonel; *The Wind and the Lion* President Theodore Roosevelt. *Apocalypse Now*, which Milius also worked on, is similarly organised around the responses of Captain Willard to Colonel Kurtz.

Thus the confessional voice-over of naive young Lt Davis is vital for our understanding of both Geronimo and Gatewood. However, here the device seems shopworn and fundamentally flawed. Davis' tedious observations diminish the Apache leader to a supporting player in his own movie. Also the fact that Davis is morally spotless - he makes a point of telling us that he didn't kill any Apaches - lets the audi-

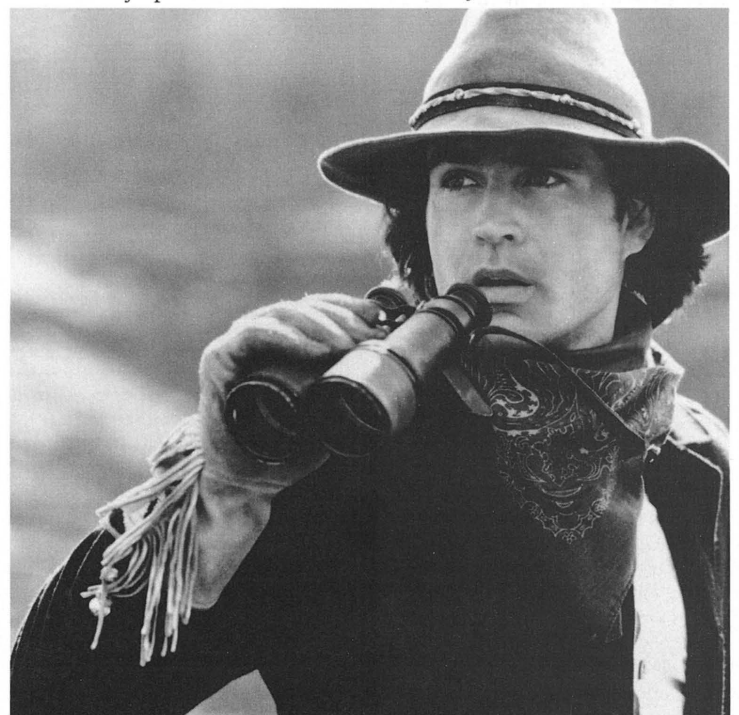
ence off the hook.

Structuring the film around Gatewood or the cynical Sieber would have been a more challenging route. Better still would have been to focus directly on Geronimo himself, the technique adopted by the superior 1993 TV movie *Geronimo*, whose hard-hitting closing sequence - in which Geronimo confronts long-time Milius icon Theodore Roosevelt - could almost be a deliberate riposte to the idea of Geronimo as an American legend.

In comparison, Walter Hill's film is an annoying muddle. His main strategy, the voice-over, has two complementary focuses of admiration: Geronimo and Gatewood. These characters have to be presented as kindred spirits to enforce the Americanising impetus and the film does its best to comply. Both are treated badly by the US Army, and both spurn conventional military tactics: Gatewood finds Geronimo with a mere three men, Geronimo defies 5,000 with less than 40.

Unfortunately, unexplained ambiguities in Gatewood's character constantly interfere with our understanding of Geronimo. As a Southerner, he is presented as an expert on lost causes. "Don't love what you're fighting for and don't hate what you're fighting against," is Sieber's succinct summing up of his nature. And how to explain his selling out of Geronimo? The film refuses to put a Judas slant on his behavior, giving him a line which sounds hopelessly inadequate: "We're trying to make a country here - it's hard." It is impossible to match those sentiments with Geronimo's stark line, "Once I moved around like the wind, now I surrender." *Geronimo and Lt Gatewood* might have been a more accurate title for the film. But only if granted the caustic irony of, say, Robert Altman's *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* could it have done justice to either of them.

Tom Tunney



Taking the long view: Jason Patric

Kådisbellan (The Slingshot)

Sweden 1993

Director: Åke Sandgren

Certificate
12

Distributor
Columbia TriStar

Production Companies
AB Svensk
Filmindustri/SVT Kanal
1 Drama/Nordisk Film
A/S/Svenska Film
Institute

Producer
Waldemar Bergendahl
Prague:
Miro Vostiar

Production Associate
Kerstin Bonnier

Production Co-ordinator
Thomas Allerkrantz

Production Manager
Anita Tesler
Prague:
Romana Cisarjov

Unit Production Manager
Serina Björnborn
Prague:
Václav Rádlo

Location Manager
Thomas Allerkrantz

Post-production
Hans-Erik Ahn

Assistant Directors
Lars Lindström
Prague:
Jitka Stropkov

Casting
Catti Edfeldt
Anette Mandoki
Lars Lindström
Prague:
Jana Pospisilov

Screenplay
Åke Sandgren
Based on the novel
by Roland Schütt

Script Supervisor
Anja Hede

Director of Photography
Göran Nilsson

B Camera Operator
Torbjörn Andersson

Steadicam Operator
Mike Tiverios

Editor
Grete Moldrup

Production Designer
Lasse Westfelt

Art Director
Lasse Westfelt
Prague:
Tomás Moravec

Set Decorators
Kristoffer Sjöström
Per Johansson

Costume Design
Inger Pehrsson
Prague:
Iveta Trmalov
Iveta Faulknerov

Wardrobe
Ulla-Britt Chrysosng

Make-up
Helena Carmback
Prague:
Václav Kunc
Petr Kunc
Pavel Kunc

Music
Björn Isfält

Music Performed by
Nils Landgren
Johan Alenius
Ingvar Svensson

Sound Design/Mix
Michael Dela
Nalle

Sound
Willie Peterson-Berger
Jean-Frédéric Axelsson

Sound Effects
Julien Naudin

Cast
Jesper Salén
Roland Schütt
Stellan Skarsgård
Fritiof Schütt
Basia Frydman
Zipa Schütt
Niclas Olund
Bertil Schütt
Ernst-Hugo Järegård
Lundin
Reine Brynolfsson
Hinge Bergegren
Jacob Leygraf
Stickan
Frida Hallgren
Margit
Axel Dübberg
Inspector Gissle
Ing-Marie Carlsson
Karin Adamsson
Ernst Günther
Principal
Tomas Norström
Boxing Trainer
Rolf Lassgård
Prisoner
Jurek Sawka
Kopowski, the Orthodox
Par Ericsson
Perling
Heinz Hopf
Margreth Weivers
Tommy Johnson
Per Sandberg
Rolf Eberg
Viktor Friberg
Kenneth Söderman
Claes Hartelius
Göran Engman
Michael Kallanvaara
Carl Magnus Dellow
Roland Hedlund
Anna Carlsen
Bengt Schildström
Boris Karlsson
Peter Viitanen
Hampus Pettersson
Frederik Adén
Georg Ahl
Kalle Strikbeck
Martin Odelius
Chrstian Vaara
Staffan Björk
Andreas Siegers

9,243 feet
102 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Subtitles

1920s Stockholm. 12-year-old Roland Schütt lives with his father Fritiof, an ardent socialist, his Russian Jewish mother Zipa, and his older brother Bertil, a would-be boxing champion. Fritiof, crippled with sciatica and needing regular morphine injections for the pain, is none the less chosen to model for a portrait of the King, much to his sardonic amuse-

ment. The family attend a political meeting to promote the use of condoms (illegal in Sweden) which is raided by police, but the audience, including Fritiof and Zipa, furiously resist. Roland, who has a mechanical bent, repairs a bicycle for an older boy, Stickan, who offers to sell it to him. Having no money, Roland promises to pay for it later and meantime to repair and paint bikes for Stickan's friends. His financial situation worsens when, in a fight, he destroys Bertil's boxing gloves and must reimburse his father for a new pair. At school he incurs the enmity of his teacher, Lundin, who hates him as a Jew and a socialist.

Once Roland has painted the bike, Stickan, not having been paid, takes it back. Zipa is secretly instructing women in the use of condoms; to raise money, Roland steals some to sell as balloons, but the outraged Zipa bursts them. Undaunted, he devises catapults from scrap metal and condom rubber. They sell fast, but when the school authorities find out Lundin sadistically beats Roland. A Russian orthopaedist, Kopowski, cures Fritiof's sciatica by the traction method. The police arrive at the Schütts' house, since the bikes Stickan brought for repair were stolen. Roland protests his innocence, but after a night in the cells signs a confession, and is sentenced to reform school. Before leaving he takes revenge on Lundin by putting lice on the staff toilet - a trick learned from a cell-mate. The reform school, out in the country, proves to be not such a bad place, and Roland dives happily into the lake with a new friend.

The Swedish period childhood film has almost become a small sub-genre in itself, with its characteristic bitter-sweet flavour, scrupulous recreation of evocative detail and (as the production notes for *The Slingshot* usefully summarise) its "mixture of tragedy, farce, heartbreak and exhilaration". *My Life As a Dog* is widely seen as having set the pattern, but Lasse Hallström's film also had its predecessors - among them Allan Edwall's gentle *Ake and His World*, Jan Troell's grittier *Here Is Your Life*, and even Bergman's masterly valediction *Fanny and Alexander*. Though from time to time risking a sense of *déjà vu*, *The Slingshot* more than earns its place in the tradition.

Åke Sandgren's film, which he scripted from an autobiographical novel by the real Roland Schütt, revolves - as any good rites-of-passage movie must - around the hero's struggle to establish a sense of identity. "How do I know whether I was meant to be Swedish?" Roland muses, faced with his double outsider status as a Jew and a socialist. "Was I meant to be who I am?" Everyone seems determined to foist an identity on him; at one point his mother, sensitive to her own alien origins, sends him off to school in full Swedish national costume, complete with ludicrous red bobbles on his hat. His Jewishness is literally knocked into him by almost everyone he meets - not since *Chinatown* can a nose have come

under such sustained assault - and his teacher, with unconcealed pleasure, beats him as "a Jew - a socialist - and a criminal."

But though beleaguered and accident prone, Roland never comes across as the passive victim. There's an engaging doggedness about him (Jesper Salén's performance tempers wide-eyed innocence with a hint of truculence) anchored in the one aspect of his identity he never doubts - his chosen vocation as an inventor. "The Underwater Sock, by Roland Schütt," he remarks proudly, experimenting with a condom as footwear, and names his pet toad Ericsson after the great Swedish-American marine inventor. Even though his dexterity usually gets him into trouble, it's through his increasingly ingenious devices that he gains in confidence until he can at last welcome the reform school as a liberation, free from the constrictions of his emotionally rapacious family.

Around him Sandgren creates a busy, pungent townscape of foundries, cart horses and cobbled alleys (Prague, accommodating as ever, standing in for 20s Stockholm), vividly evoked but never made to seem cosy. The film's strength is in not going for easy nostalgia, making it clear that, for all its picturesque period charm, this was in many ways a harsh, callous world where only Roland's own resilience will keep him from a lifetime of petty crime. (It's intriguing too, as spike-helmeted police brutally suppress a family planning lecture, to realise how recent is Sweden's reputation for social enlightenment.) And now and then Sandgren jolts us with an outlandish image, as when Roland and his father, mistrustfully entering Kapowski's surgery, are confronted by a row of bodies crucified in mid-air, hanging alive but unblinking with arms outstretched in literally suspended animation. It's unexpectedly gothic moments such as this that sum up *The Slingshot*'s subtly off-centre appeal.

Philip Kemp



The age of rubber: Jesper Salén

Major League II

USA 1994

Director: David S. Ward

Certificate
PG

Distributor
Warner Bros

Production Company
Morgan Creek
production

Executive Producer
Gary Barber

Producers
James G. Robinson
David S. Ward

Line Producer
Ed Markley

Production Supervisor
Susan Vanderbeek

Production Co-ordinators
Louise Rosner
Thais Zoe

Unit Production Manager
Edward D. Markley

Location Manager
Ken Haber

Post-production
Supervisor
Jody Levin

2nd Unit Director
Edward D. Markley

Assistant Directors
Jervam A. Swartz
Louis S. Race
Tom C. Peitzman

Casting
Ferne Cassel
ADR Group:
L.A. Maddogs
Baltimore:
Benita Hofstetter

Screenplay
R.J. Stewart

Story
R.J. Stewart
Tom S. Parker
Jim Jennewein

Script Supervisor
Susan Bierbaum

Director of Photography
Victor Hammer

2nd Unit Director of Photography
John M. Stephens

Camera Operators
Bill Coleman
Mark R. Van Loon

Steadicam Operator
Mark R. Van Loon

Special Visual Effects
Howard Anderson
Company

Editors
Paul Seydour
Donn Cambern

Production Designer
Stephen Hendrickson

Art Director
Gary Diamond

Set Design
Kyung Chang

Set Decorator
Leslie Bloom

Set Dressers
Clark Hospelhorn
James M. Bloom Jnr
Patrick M. Stare

Storyboard Artist
Raymond G. Prado

Special Effects
Co ordinator
Bruno van Zeebroeck

Costume Design
Bobbie Read

Costume Supervisors
Michael Joseph Long
Deb Dalton

Make-up
Allan A. Apone
Jeanne Van Phue

Hairstylists
Gabriel Borgo
Janice Kinigopoulos

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Music
Michel Colombier

Music Supervisor
Peter Afterman

Music Editors
Tom Milano
Terry Delsing
Tom Kramer

Songs
"Wild Thing" by Chip Taylor, performed by X; "Shake Me Up" by Bill Payne, M. Kibbee, Paul Barrere, Craig Fuller, performed by Little Fear; "(Everything I Do) Got to Be Funky" by and performed by Maurice John Vaughn; "The House is Rocking" by Stevie Ray Vaughan, Doyle Bramhall, performed by Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble; "All My Love is Gone" by and performed by Lyle Lovett; "Arrivederci, Roma" by Garinei Giovannini, Renato Rascal; "Rude Mood" by and performed by Stevie Ray Vaughan; "Boom Bapa Boom" by and performed by Jimmie Vaughan

Supervising Sound Editor
Larry Kemp

Dialogue Editors
Mark Gordon
Trevor Jolly
Sukey Fontelieu
Scott Burrow

Supervising ADR
Linda Folk

ADR Editors
Bill Voigtlander
Laura Graham

Foley Editors
Craig Jaeger
Willy Allen

Sound Mixers
Robert Anderson
Music:
Clark Germain

ADR Mixers
Doc Kane
Charleen Richards

Foley Mixer
Marilyn Graf

Sound Re-records
Chris Carpenter
D.P. Hemphill
Bill W. Benton

Sound Effects Editors
Chris Hogan
Jay B. Richardson
Dino Dimuro
Dan Hegeman

Foley Artists
Kevin Bartnof
Ellen Heuer

Technical Adviser
Steve Yeager

Stunt Co-ordinators
James Arnett
Eddie Braun
John Moio

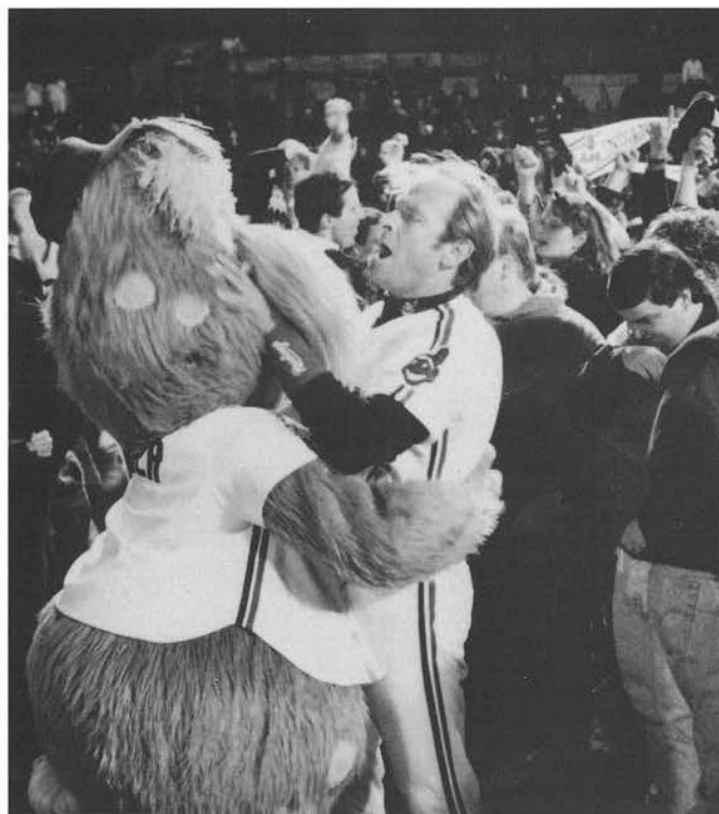
Cast
Charlie Sheen
Rick Vaughn
Tom Berenger
Jake Taylor
Corbin Bernsen
Roger Dorn
Dennis Haysbert
Pedro Cerrano
James Gammon
Lou Brown
Omar Epps
Willie Mays Hayes
Eric Bruskotter
Rube Baker
Takaaki Ishibashi
Isuro Tanaka
Alison Doody
Flannery
Michelle Burke
Nikki Reese

David Keith
Jack Parkman
Margaret Whitton
Rachel Phelps
Bob Uecker
Harry Doyle
Steve Yeager
Coach "Duke" Temple
Kevin Hickey
Schoup
Skip Gripars
Monte
Kevin Crowley
Vic
Bill Leff
Bobby
Michael Mundra
Frankie
Courtney Pee
Steve
Farajji Rasulallah
Tommy
Edward Woodson
Tim
Ted Duncan
Ron
Marie-Louise White
Lisa
Saige Spinney
Big Woman
Michael Willis
Airport Photographer
Jason Kravitz
Accountant
Alan Wade
Psychiatrist
Keith Johnson
Vaughn's Valet
Jay Leno
Himself
Susan Duvall
Lou's Nurse
Ron Meadows Jr
Orderly
Jesse Ventura
White Lightning
Keith Uchima
Kurt Uchima
Groundskeepers
Richard Salamanca
Harold Surratt
Reporters
Daniel O'Donnell
Suit

Richard Shiff
Director
Louis Turenne
Distinguished
Gentleman
Patrick Smith
Clapper Boy
Dan Kilday
Slider
Barry Cochran
William Reuter
Ken Medlock
Michael Forrest
David Boswell
Skip Apple
Bob Roesner
Stefan Aleksander
Umpires
Dick Stillwell
Cleveland Trainer
David Sherrill
White Sox
Centrefielder
J. Michael Sarbaugh
Pirate Shortstop
Jeff Sheaffer
Pirate on 2nd Base
Tom Quinn
Red Sox Manager
John Millisitz
Red Sox Catcher
Jim Dedrick
White Sox Pitcher
Bob Hopkins
Toronto Shortstop
Bobby Joe Brown
Ballplayer Playing
Cards
Wayne Crist
Vendor
Julia Miller
Stadium Control Room
Operator
Ashton Smith
Black Hammer
Announcer

9,439 feet
105 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
DuArt
Prints by
Technicolor



Dances with hamsters: Corbin Bernsen

and an impassioned speech by Rube fire them to improved performances. Vaughn starts to see Nikki again and resumes riding motorcycles. After a cycle of victories, the Indians make it to the playoffs against the White Sox, despite many misfortunes including Lou the manager having a heart attack.

At the top of the ninth inning, the Indians are barely ahead. Taylor puts Vaughn on, dressed in his old attire, and the crowd cheers wildly. Vaughn is so determined to defeat his old rival Parkman that he risks walking the batter before him. Pitching faster and better than he has done all year, Vaughn strikes Parkman out, thus winning the game and a place in the World Series.

While all over Hollywood male leads are waxing sensitive and even Arnie is getting in touch with his feelings, in the world of *Major League II* some things never change. Even though in the real world play has been indefinitely suspended due to a players' strike, these Indians still have their balls – the standard leather ones weighing 5 oz. and measuring 9-9^{1/4} inches in circumference. Rarely does the cinema witness such an unbridled display of testicular preoccupation and pride. Gonads of all sorts are the film's central trope, whether as objects of derision and thus the impetus to improvement, or lovingly framed by the camera as the catchers signal the next pitch over their crotches. Though the comedy may be lame as an undrugged British athlete, the plot as predictable as Gazza's next meal, there is still something quaintly comforting about the unquestioned certainties of masculinity displayed here. Like the slow, oddly dressed game itself, baseball movies are best when they stick to

the old rules and refuse to clutter the game with girls and too much stuff about relationships.

The best thing about *Major League II* – like its predecessor, to which it sticks closely in structure – is that it captures the soggy hot dog flavour of the game undiluted. Interspersed with regrettably necessary bits of drama about the players' private lives, the bulk of the film consists of ball play. Crisply edited so as to make the game intelligible even to the most baseball-illiterate Brit, the film utilises slow-motion in a truly cinematic way, recalling Riefenstahl's *Olympia*. Tongue loosely in cheek, it recycles all the standard devices of the sports movie, such as montage sequences of victories with spinning sports-page headlines and a "Win this one for Lou" speech. In addition, the film regroups most of its original cast list, with Tom Berenger wasting his time, and Charlie Sheen just looking wasted. Now the big star, Wesley Snipes has traded up to lead parts, so his old character of Willie Mays Hayes is taken over by Omar Epps. However, the film exacts revenge by placing Hayes in a parody of Snipes' current action films, in which he does "both his own stunts and his own acting!"

The chorus of fans commenting on the team's progress, led by homophobic announcer Harry Doyle and counterpointed by a yobbish trio on the bleachers, embodies the white working-class culture which makes up the bulk of its fan base. Compared with most sports movies, the film is unusually swollen with crowd shots, partly as a means of interpellating the viewer, and partly because the game itself is more marked than any other by the intense rivalries of local patriotism.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Monkey Trouble

USA 1994

Director: Franco Amurri

Certificate
U
Distributor
Entertainment
Production Company
New Line Cinema
presents
A Percy Main
production
In association with
Effe Films/Victor
Company of Japan Ltd
Executive Producer
Ridley Scott
Producers
Mimi Polk
Heide Rufus Isaacs
Co-producer
John C. Broderick
Associate Producer
Christian Halsey
Solomon
Production Executive
Carla Fry
Production Co-ordinator
Susan V. McConnell
Location Manager
Robert L. Dohan
Post-production
Supervisor
Brad Blake
Post-production
Co-ordinator
Pam Hilse
Post-production Executive
Ric Keeley
2nd Unit Director
Les Dilley
Casting
Karen Rea
Doreen Lane
Screenplay
Franco Amurri
Stu Krieger
Script Supervisor
Elizabeth Ludwick
Director of Photography
Luciano Tovoli
Camera Operator
Monty Rowan
Steadicam Operators
Peter Jensen
Michael D. Brown
Editors
Ray Lovejoy
Chris Peppe
Production Designer
Les Dilley
Art Director
Nathan Crowley
Set Decorator
Denise Pizzini
Set Dresser
Lisa Yvette Lopez
Storyboard Artist
Daren R. Dochterman
Special Effects
Co-ordinator
J.D. Street IV
Costume Design
Eileen Kennedy
Wardrobe Supervisor
Allyn Cetta Katleman
Make-up
Michelle J. Buhler
Hair stylist
Scott Williams
Title Design
Dan Winthrop
Titles/Opticals
Melrose Titles &
Optical Effects
Music
Mark Mancina
Music Producers
Mark Mancina
Jay Rifkin
Music Editor
Chris McGeary
Music Consultant
Dawn Soler
Songs
"Sold For Me", "Posie"
by Dylan MacAlinon,
Granville Ames,
performed by The
Aintree Boys; "Who
Gets Da Loot" by

JD Tru, Ross Hogarth,
performed by Quo;
"VB Rap" by Tim
Gedemer, Howard
Drossin, Double Dog;
"Girls" by Darlene
Gallegos, performed
by Gee Boyz; "Monkey
Shines" by and
performed by Robert
J. Walsh
Supervising Sound Editors
Craig Clark
Marc "Leggs" Fishman
Dialogue Editors
Alan Shultz
Cathie Speakman
Jim Brookshire
ADR Editor
Michael Goodman
Production Sound Mixers
Michael Eyje
Charles Kelly
ADR Sound Mixers
Jeff Vaughn
Bill Freesh
Foley Mixer
Jackson Schwartz
Sound Recordists
ADR:
Robert Guastini
Music:
Bret Newman
Steven M. Stern
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Ken S. Polk
Tim Philben
Sound Transfers
Scott Sound
Sound Effects Editors
John Johnson
Ben Wilkins
Robert Guastini
Vocal Special Effects
Frank Weller
Foley Artists
Joe Sebella
Bess Hopper
Stunt Co-ordinators
Randy "Fife"
Jeff Smolek
Animal Trainers
Mark Harden
Christie Miele
Jules Sylvester
Janine L. Aines
Cheryl Shawver

Cast
Harvey Keitel
Azro
Mimi Rogers
Amy
Thora Birch
Eva
"Finster"
Dodger
Christopher McDonald
Tom
Adrian Johnson
Julian Johnson
Jack
Kevin Scannell
Peter
Alison Elliott
Tessa
Robert Miranda
Drake
Victor Argo
Charlie
Remy Ryan
Katie
Adam Lavorgna
Mark
Jo Champa
Annie
John Lafayette
Cates
Andi Chapman
Christine
Julie Payne
Librarian
Kimberly Cullum
Jesse
Molly David
Kaye Weller

After their Cinderella winning season last year, the Cleveland Indians baseball team begins another season of spring training. Former shortstop Dorn has bought the team from Rachel Phelps at an inflated price. Taylor fails to make the final line-up because of his age and becomes a coach instead. New players include mercenary free agent Parkland and a gormless rookie nicknamed Rube, while fame and success has gone to the heads of most of the original star players. Rick 'Wild Thing' Vaughn has forsaken his trademark haircut and motorcycle for lucrative sponsorship deals and a limo. He is dating a sleek agent instead of his old girlfriend Nikki, who works with underprivileged children. Willie Mays Hayes has made a film, and Cerrano has forsaken voodoo worship for Buddhism. The team lose their first game of the season when Cerrano hits a bird with a fly ball and neglects to run home out of grief-stricken guilt. As the season progresses, they fail to improve and their once-optimistic fans lose faith in their team.

Parkman is traded to the White Sox for a Japanese outfielder, Tanaka. The team begins to lose so much money that Dorn is forced to sell them back to Rachel Phelps, who plans to sack everyone and move the team to Florida when they come bottom of the league as she predicts. At their lowest ebb, Tanaka's slanders of their masculinity

Harvey Vernon
Harold Weller
Tereza Ellis
Cashier
Frank Lugo
Mexican Park
Attendant
Gerry Bednob
Mr Rao
Aaron Lustig
Store Manager
Bea Soong
Japanese Woman
Deborah White
Katie's Mother
Richard Reichg
Assistant to Mr Big
Robert A. Perry
Echo Man
Rino Piccolo
Man in Crowd
Mary Goldman
Park Attendant
Gabriel Christopher
Bored Cashier

Diane Manzo
Jogger
Carrie Pauley
Girl With Kite
Stephen J. Today
Rooftop Worker
William McGore
Raymond Gallegos
Richard Gallegos
Ruben Gallegos
Gee Boyz

8,651 feet
96 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

● Venice Beach. Fingers, a capuchin monkey, performs and picks pockets for gypsy organ-grinder Azro 'Shorty' Kohn. Two mobsters want to hire the monkey for a robbery; as a demonstration, Fingers steals some jewellery, and Azro is given an advance and told to wait for a call. The burgled house is the home of nine-year-old Eva Gregory, who feels neglected; her mother Amy and policeman stepfather Tom, busy doting on their baby son, won't let her keep a pet.

Azro returns home to find his wife and son have left him. Then Fingers runs away, and encounters Eva in the park. She takes him home and hides him in her room, not knowing that Fingers, now renamed Dodger, has stolen an elderly lady's earrings and stashed them in a bedside casket. Eva wants to tell her best friend Katie about Dodger, but she turns up with a gang of other children waiting to hear the secret; Eva refuses to tell them. Due to spend the weekend with her father near the beach, Eva tries to cry off but changes her mind when he cancels. Instead she pretends to Amy and Tom that the arrangement is unchanged, getting Katie's mother to drop her off at her father's house and reconciling with Katie on the way.

The house is locked, but Dodger is able to break in. On the beach front, Eva makes money from Dodger's antics. In a supermarket, she is accused of thieving stuff that Dodger has been taking behind her back. She is let off but then discovers Dodger's hoard from the beach, and begins re-educating him to prefer bananas to jewellery.

Meanwhile Azro has tracked his monkey to Eva's father's house. Eva and Dodger escape, but he tracks her down to the pet shop where she leaves Dodger during school. Meanwhile, Amy and Tom have found Dodger's hoard and believe that Eva is responsible. Azro brings Dodger to demonstrate his skills for the mob boss but finds he won't thief anymore. After Azro makes a quick exit, the monkey escapes and heads back to the park where he is seen by Katie, who notifies Eva. Azro asks his son to help him retrieve the animal. Amy and Tom are about to go in search for Eva when their son wanders in and says his first

word, "monkey". They realise that Eva has been telling the truth when Dodger appears. Meanwhile, Eva is rescued from Azro by Dodger. After Tom's colleagues arrest Azro, his son arrives and Eva gives him the monkey. However, he slips his leash and returns to Eva who is able to bring both Dodger and her baby brother to school for her 'show and tell.'

● The Ridley Scott/Mimi Polk production axis seem determined to be eclectic in their output, following up *The Browning Version* with this resolutely Californian comedy aimed at kids. Writer/director Franco Amurri's scheme to emulate the success of *My Girl* and *Home Alone* involves a convoluted plot, driven by a relentlessly dominant electronic music score that leaves little breathing space to dwell on character and performance.

Leaving aside the question of whether or not child actress Thora Birch can handle the speedy range of emotions she is asked to (resentment = pout, fear = screwed-up eyes, embarrassment = looking from side to side), the basis of her character is anyway a rather sketchy mixture of possible anxieties. Eva's desire for a pet is both a sublimation of her jealousy of her toddler halfbrother and an attempt to match her mother's joy with her own little bundle of fun, but her vague resentment seems equally shared out between toddler, mother, stepfather, father and best friend. Thus there seems no definite alternative to the bogey-man bad-fatherhood of Harvey Keitel's cartoon villain. This lack of a plausible hero belies the apparently happy ending, which seems contingent on Eva's stepfather losing his allergy to animals.

Despite the frantic pace, the educational parenting parallels tend to distract from the comedy. Attempts to match up the two, such as Eva's attempt to toilet-train Dodger, are perfunctory at best, and the rather cruel way that Azro's embittered son (the monkey's 'true' parent) loses his pet to her at the end sours whatever good humour the film has gathered. Much the saddest sight, however, is the abject gold-toothed mugging of Keitel in an unfamiliar comic role. While he manages not to be too frightening, the latent psychosis carried over from his trademark bad guy roles means that he's never laughable enough to be the butt of slapstick jokes. He lacks the vulnerability that Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern bring to ritual humiliation in the *Home Alone* movies.

Consequently the weight of the movie falls on the slender shoulders of Thora Birch and her monkey. For the film's premise to work, you need to be susceptible to the diminutive scene-stealer's doffing his cap on cue and his scampering antics among the skateboarders, body-builders, check-out cashiers and librarians of Venice Beach; it's a milieu, however, in which mere monkeying around seems relatively sane behaviour.

Nick James

Pulp Fiction

USA 1994

Director: Quentin Tarantino

Certificate

18

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Miramax Films

presents

A Band Apart/Jersey

Films production

Executive Producers

Danny DeVito

Michael Shamberg

Stacey Sher

Co-ective Producers

Bob Weinstein

Harvey Weinstein

Richard N. Gladstein

Producer

Lawrence Bender

Production Co-ordinator

Anna-Lisa Nilsson

Production Manager

Paul Hellerman

Location Manager

Robert Earl Craft

Post-production

Supervisor

Heidi Vogel

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Kara Mazzola

Assistant Directors

Francis R. (Sam)

Mahony III

Kelly Kiernan

John "Crash" Hyde Jr

William Paul Clark

Casting

Ronnie Yeskel

Gary M. Zuckerbrod

Associate:

Ruth Lambert

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Quentin Tarantino

Stories

Quentin Tarantino

Roger Avary

Script Supervisor

Miner Kitrosser

Director of Photography

Andrzej Sekula

2nd Unit Photography

Alan Sherrod

Camera Operator

Michael Levine

Steadicam Operator

Robert Gorlick

Graphics

Gerald Martinez

Chris Cullen

Editor

Sally Menke

Production Designer

David Wasco

Art Director

Charles Collum

Set Design

Daniel Bradford

Jack Lisiewicz

Set Decorator

Sandy Reynolds-Wasco

Set Dressers

McPherson O. Downs

Joseph Grafmuller

Daniel Rothenberg

Scenic Artist

Chris L. Winslow

Special Effects

Co ordinator

Larry Fioritto

Special Effects

Wesley Mattox

Stephen DeLollis

Pat Domenico

Costume Design

Betsy Heimann

Costume Supervisor

Jaqueline Aronson

Make-up Artist

Michelle Buhler

Special Make-up Effects

Kurtzman, Nicotero

and Berger EFX Group

Supervisors:

Robert Kurtzman

Gregory Nicotero

Howard Berger

Hair

Supervisor:

Audree Futterman

Design:

Iain Jones

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music Supervisors

Karyn Rachtman

Kathy Nelson

Music Editor

Rolf Johnson

Music Co-ordinator

Mary Ramos

Music Consultants

Chuck Kelley

Laura Lovelace

Songs

"Misirlou" by Fred

Wise, Milton Leeds,

S.K. Russell, Nicholas

Roubains, performed

by Dick Dale & His

Del Tones; "Strawberry

Letter # 23" by Shuggie

Otis, performed by

The Brothers Johnson;

"Bustin' Surfboards"

by Gerald Sanders,

Jesse Sanders, Norman

Sanders, Leonard

Delaney, performed

by The Tornadoes;

"Son of a Preacher

Man" by John Hurley,

Ronnie Wilkins,

performed by Dusty

Springfield; "Lonesome

Town" by Baker Knight,

performed by Ricky

Nelson; "Rumble"

by F.L. Wray Snr,

M. Cooper, performed

by Link Wray And

His Raymen; "Ace of

Spades" by F.L. Wray

Snr, M. Cooper,

performed by Link

Wray; "Coffee Shop

Music"; "Jungle

Boogie" by Ronald Bell,

Claudes Smith, George

Brown, Robert

Mickens, Donald Boyce,

Richard Westfield,

Dennis Thomas, Robert

Bell, performed by

Kool & the Gang;

"Let's Stay Together"

by Al Green, Al Jackson

Jnr, Willie Mitchell,

performed by Al Green;

"Bullwinkle Part II"

by Dennis Rose, Ernest

Furrow, performed

by The Centurians;

"Waitin' in School"

by Johnny Burnette,

Dorsey Burnette,

performed by Gary

Shorelle; "Since I First

Met You" by H.B.

Barnum, performed

by The Rodins;

"Teenagers in Love"

by William Rosenauer,

performed by Woody

Thorne; "Girl You'll

Be a Woman Soon"

by Neil Diamond,

performed by Urge

Overkill; "Flowers

On the Wall" by Lewis

Dewitt, performed

by The Statler Brothers;

"Comanche" by and

performed by The

Revels; "You Can Never

Tell" by and performed

by Chuck Berry; "If

Love is a Red Dress

(Hang Me in Rags)"

by and performed by

Maria McKee; "Out of

Limits" by Michael Gordon, performed by The Marketts; "Surf Rider" by Bob Bogle, Nole Edwards, Don Wilson, performed by The Lively Ones
Supervising Sound Editor
Stephen H. Flick
Sound Editors
David Bartlett
G.W. Brown
John Hulsman
Richard Marx
Charles E. Smith
Dean Beville
Avram Dean Gold
Patricio Libenson
Stewart Nelsen
Scott Weber
Supervising ADR Editor
Judee Flick
Production Sound Mixer
Ken King
ADR Mixer
Jeff Courtie
Pre-dub/Foley Mixer
Ezra Dweck
Dubbing Recordist
Larry Pitman
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Rick Ash
Dean A. Zupancic
Foley
Joan Rowe
Catherine Rowe
Stunt Co-ordinator
Ken Lesco
Film Extracts
The Losers (1970)

Cast

Tim Roth

Pumpkin

Amanda Plummer

Honey Bunny

John Travolta

Vincent Vega

Samuel L. Jackson

Jules Winnfield

Uma Thurman

Mia Wallace

Harvey Keitel

The Wolf

Bruce Willis

Butch Coolidge

Rosanna Arquette

Jody

Ving Rhames

Marsellus Wallace

Eric Stoltz

Lance

Christopher Walken

Captain Koons

Maria de Medeiros

Fabienna

Laura Lovelace

Waitress

Robert Ruth

Coffee Shop

Phil LaMarr

Marvin

Burr Steers

Roger

Frank Whaley

Brett

Alexis Arquette

Fourth Man

Paul Calderon

Paul

Bronagh Gallagher

Trudi

Steve Buscemi

Buddy Holly

Brenda Hillhouse

ing cocaine all night, finds Vincent's heroin. Thinking it is cocaine, she takes it and overdoses. Vincent takes her to his dealer's house and they manage to bring her back to life with an adrenaline injection. Mia and Vincent decide not to tell Marsellus what has happened.

The scene changes. A small boy is introduced to a Captain Koons, a Vietnam friend of his father's, who has come to give him his dead father's watch. The little boy is Butch, who, as an adult, wakes with a start just before his prize-fight. Butch wins the fight and escapes with his money to a motel where his girlfriend Fabienne is waiting for him. The next morning, Butch discovers that Fabienne has left his father's watch in his apartment, and decides to go back for it. Entering the apartment, he disturbs Vincent, who is sitting on the toilet. Butch kills him with his own gun, takes his watch and drives off. Seeing Marsellus in the road, he tries to run him down; both survive, and Marsellus chases Butch into a pawn shop. The owner points a gun at both of them, ties them up and, with a friend, Zed, rapes Marsellus. Butch manages to escape but decides to go back and rescue Marsellus. Marsellus allows him to leave town with his money as long as he promises not to return. Butch drives off on Zed's motorbike to collect Fabienne.

The scene flashes back to Jules and Vincent in the apartment where they kill the two boys. There is another young man hiding in the bathroom; he bursts out firing at the two men, and misses. They shoot him, and Jules vows that after this job he will give up being a hit man. They take the remaining boy hostage but in the car Vincent accidentally kills him. Covered in blood, they drive to the house of a friend, Jimmy, and elicit the help of the 'Wolf'. He instructs them on how to clean up the mess, puts them in Jimmy's casual clothes and disposes of the car and the body. Jules and Vincent go for breakfast in the diner, just as Honey Bunny and Pumpkin announce their stick-up. Jules talks them out of taking the mysterious briefcase he has for Marsellus, and persuades them to leave quietly.

It looks like a tribute to Quentin Tarantino's fast rise to fame that he has managed to draw quite such a varied crowd of names for *Pulp Fiction*. And yet when you examine those names, they are mostly those of actors in search of a hit. *Pulp Fiction* is full of five-minute culture jokes; could this be another one? Possibly; for several of the cast appear to be playing warped versions of characters for which they are known. Bruce Willis' tough guy Butch may be a *Die Hard* man, but this time round, Butch is a little bit stupid and has a nasty temper. Rosanna Arquette's crazy lady from *After Hours* has turned into a junkie's housewife, utterly absorbed in the piercings on her body. Harvey Keitel reprises his role in the *Nikita* remake *The Assassin*, as the icy, mute killer, who cleans up after dead bodies and gets rid of the liv-



Cool vamp: Uma Thurman

ing ones. Only this time, the grim-faced Wolf has absurd touches of Regular Guy about him. He chats about coffee, and his clean-up operation does not involve acid baths but soapy sponges and hose-downs. Some of the actors are not even playing out their own former roles in this rag-bag of film references: to take just Tarantino's own work, Honey Bunny and Pumpkin, who open and close the film, are straight out of *True Romance*, while the hitmen Jules and Vincent could have been in *Reservoir Dogs*.

It is a remarkable achievement that the film manages to hold all these people together through four different storylines. Perhaps because we get to know him best, the link seems to be John Travolta's Vincent. Flashy Vincent is what the disco-loving street boy Tony Manero would have grown up to be after *Saturday Night Fever*. And he still needs to sort himself out. Vincent has enough sense not to let himself sleep with Marsellus's wife, Mia, when he gets the opportunity, but is stupid enough to leave his gun lying around while he goes to the bathroom. We see him shoot heroin, and we see him on the lavatory, and Vincent therefore becomes vulnerable. But like everyone else here, he has little regard for human life, and when he accidentally shoots his hostage's head off, he worries more about his suit than about what he has done.

Violence is still Tarantino's watchword, and *Pulp Fiction* abounds with other nasty, casual deaths. No one is immune: even Vincent, the hero of sorts, dies with an undignified snap of the fingers. Life in the 90s, Tarantino seems to be saying, is speedy and worthless. The people on the screen are, as the film's title makes plain, characters from trash novels. They are

drug dealers, killers, crime lords, spoiled ladies, prize boxers, S&M rapists. Everyone is on the run, off their heads, or on the wrong side of the law. And yet in a way they could be us, too. If Tarantino has anything to say, it seems to be that there is no morality or justice in the patterns of life and death. Instead, the nihilist argument continues, there is trivia.

For if we are not supposed to empathise with the characters themselves, we cannot help recognising the junk culture world they inhabit: a world filled with ridiculous TV programmes, gimmicky restaurants where the waiters dress up as film stars and steaks are named after directors, and powerful drugs that demand their own place in a daily timetable. Trash is not just the written word, it is all around. And here it is endlessly recycled in the endless conversations of Tarantino's pulp protagonists.

In the car, Vincent and Jules are engrossed in the French names for hamburgers. As the camera follows them towards the apartment of boys they are about to kill, they talk about foot massages. When Butch gets to the motel in which he is meeting Fabienne before they flee with his winnings, she starts chatting about the fatness of her stomach. This is the kind of stuff most of us actually do spend much of our time talking about, and it puts us on a level of understanding with the characters. The effect is strangely subtle in a film that is all about crude gestures. Mia, herself a bizarre mixture of spoiled child and wise woman, remarks that Marsellus' henchmen are worse than a sewing circle when it comes to gossip. And suddenly the killers have been emasculated.

True Romance seemed to become less Quentin Tarantino and more its direc-

tor Tony Scott every time it lapsed into sentimentality, so it is hardly surprising that Tarantino imposes a sizeable emotional distance between the audience and the characters. When Butch dreams about Captain Koons (a hilarious cameo by Christopher Walken) giving him his father's watch, a sentimental episode from a thousand TV movies becomes more ludicrous and disgusting by the minute. And even though each section of the film ends with a moment of collaboration – between Vincent and Mia, Marsellus and Butch, and finally Jules, Pumpkin and Honey Bunny – the sense of shame that could bring about an attempt at a heartfelt moment is subsumed by the characters' self-interest. In the same way, it would be an effort to feel sentimental over the film's one big emotional transformation. Samuel L. Jackson's Jules is an extraordinary character, with touches of Robert Mitchum's preaching murderer in *The Night Of the Hunter*. He goes about his killing business with religious fervour, spouting Ezekiel at his terrified victims as if to justify his acts. And what changes his mind about his work? Not a crisis of conscience but a realisation of his own mortality. More self-preservation: the philosophical new Jules is as hard and cold as the old one. He resists the temptation to kill Pumpkin not because he has found mercy but because he has made a decision to stop killing.

Butch is the nearest we might get to a sentimentalist – he has a girl he loves and enough heart to go back and rescue his arch-enemy from the rapists. But Butch is not nice either. In Tarantino's movie reference library, Butch is more loudmouth Ralph Meeker in *Kiss Me Deadly* than sappy Fred MacMurray in *Double Indemnity*.

Tarantino sees such things and laughs, and makes us laugh, too. But it is not simply the nervous laughter of voyeurs relieved that these horrible things are happening to someone else and not to them. There are plenty of brilliantly funny moments, and it is to Tarantino's credit that he has managed to work modern, junk, and retro culture into his script with such ease. Some of the comedy is less engaging: there is occasionally too much slapstick screaming; the odd, knowing *Wayne's World*-style joke, in which the characters almost turn to the camera and start acting to us rather than to each other, seems out of place. We have to believe that they believe in what is happening, or everything falls apart.

Like *Reservoir Dogs*, this is stylishly shot in neo-cartoon style, with massive, distorting close-ups offset by attractively angled shots. The effect again, is of a hard, closed, rather linear world. But in some ways, there is more to *Pulp Fiction* than to the first film. For one thing, there are a few women in it, and a broader spectrum of characters. For another, by allowing just a few chinks in its dispassionate armour, mostly through Travolta's oddly affable Vincent Vega, it is easier to like rather than just admire.

Amanda Lipman

The Shadow

USA 1994

Director: Russell Mulcahy

Certificate
12

Distributor
UIP

Production Company
Bregman/Baer

Executive Producers
Louis A. Stroller
Rolf Deyhle

Co-executive Producer
Stan Weston

Producers
Martin Bregman
Willi Baer
Michael S. Bregman

Associate Producer
Patricia Churchill

Production Executive
Michael Klawitter

Production Co-ordinator
Kathleen M. Courtney

Production Manager
Patricia Churchill

Location Manager
Christine Bonnem

Post-production Supervisor
Helene Mulholland

2nd Unit Director
Dick Ziker

Assistant Directors
Louis d'Esposito
Douglas S. Ornstein
Jono Oliver

Casting
Mary Colquhoun
Voice Casting:
Barbara Harris

Screenplay
David Koepp
Based on:
Advance Magazine
Publishers Inc.'s
character 'The Shadow'

Script Supervisor
June Sampson

Director of Photography
Stephen H. Burum

Camera Operator
Dustin Blauvelt

Steadicam Operator
Mark O'Kane

Visual Effects
Producer/Supervisor:
Alison Savitch
Co-ordinator:
Carmen Eckes-Baer

Additional Visual Effects
Supervisor:
Kevin O'Neill
Optical Supervisor:
Dave Emerson
Digital Supervisor:
Brian Griffin
Digital Animation:
Kevin Kutchaver
Enid Tihanyi Zentelis
Optical:
William Conner
Todd Hall
Lisa Mann
Greg Tagawa

Visual Effects/Computer Graphics Imagery
R. Greenberg
Associates West
Supervisor:
Stuart Robertson
Creative Supervisor:
Joseph Francis
Executive Producer:
Tricia Henry Ashford
Line Producer:
Steven T. Puri
Digital Film
Supervisor:
Laurel Klick
CG Supervisors:
James M. Goodman
Mark Voelpel
Isa Alsup
Post-production
Supervisor:
Lori J. Nelson

Miniature Photography
Chandler Group
Visual Effects
Tim Angelo
Production Supervisor:
Terry Clotiaux
MC/EFX Supervisor:
Don Baker
Production
Co-ordinator:
Lisa Knaggs

Special Visual Effects
Illusion Arts
Syd Dutton
Bill Taylor
Matte Artist:
Robert Stromberg
Matte Photography:
Mark Sawicki
John Sullivan
Dave Stump
Optical Photography:
David S. Williams Jnr
Matte Effects:
Lynn Ledgerwood
Digital Supervisor:
Richard Patterson
Digital Animation:
Fumi Mashimo
Production Manager:
Catherine Sudolcan

Special Visual Effects Production
Supervisors:
Craig Barron
Michael Pangrazio
Executive in Charge
of Production:
Krystyna Demkowicz
Matte Artist
Supervisor:
Chris Evans
Matte Artist:
Caroleen Green
Matte Camera
Operators:
Rich McKay
Wade Childress
Digital Compositing:
Paul Rivera
Modelmaker:
Joel Friesch
Production
Co-ordinator:
Martin Matzinger

Digital Film Compositing
Mimi Abers
Edie Paul
Peter Sternlicht
John Tostado
Executive Producer:
Mark Franco
Optical Supervisor:
C. Paul Bolger
Production Manager:
Cordy Rierson
Recording:
Karen Skouras

Digital Effects
Supervisor:
Chris Regan
Production
Co-ordinator:
Lisa Kelly
Executive Producer:
Joe Gareri

Editor
Peter Honess

Production Designer
Joseph Nemeo III

Art Directors
Dan Olekiewicz
Steve Wolff
Jack Johnson

Set Design
William Law III
Carl J. Stensel
James Tocci

Set Decorator
Garrett Lewis

Set Dressers
Michael R. Driscoll
Michael Schmidt
Jack Forwalter
Mark Woods
Don Chafey

Miniatures
Stetson Visual Services
Robert Spurlock
Mark Stetson
Supervisor:
Mark Stetson
Chief Model Maker:
Ian Hunter
On-Stage Model
Crew Chief:
Dana Yuricich
SVSI Producer:
Robin L. d'Arcy
Model Makers:
Greg Bryant
Mike Forster
David Freund
Hiroshi "Kan" Ikeuchi
Jeff Leake
Brian Mann
Mike Possert
Paula Schneider
Dennis Schultz
Chris Simmons
Sandy Stewart
George Willis
Robert Sculptor:
Tully Summers
Lead Miniature Painter:
Renée Rabache
SVSI Co-ordinator:
Tim Sprague

Special Effects
Supervisor:
Albert Delgado
Co-ordinator:
Kenneth D. Pepiot
Foreman:
Gintar Repecka
Robert L. Olmstead
Gary D. Bierend
Robert L. Johnson
Jeff Pepiot
Kelly Kerby
Larry W. Bowman
Gary L. Karas

Costume Design
Bob Ringwood
Special Costumes:
Ruggiero Peruzzi

Costume Supervisor
Eric H. Sandberg

Make-up
Key:
Ronnie Specter
Carl Fullerton
Jo-Anne Smith-Ojeil
Jene Fielder

Special Make-up Effects
Greg Cannom

Hair stylist
Key:
Candace Neal
Rick Provenzano
Janine Rae Rath
Shirley Crawford

Titles/Opticals
Howard A.
Anderson Co.
Supervisor:
Jon Stern
Co-ordinators:
Gary Crandall
Jeff Hutchison
Line-up Supervisor:
Michael L. Griffin
Line-up:
Bernard Joseph Patrick
Reilly
Leilani McHugh
Camera:
Richard Cohen
Stanley Miller
Projection Scenes:
Don Hansard
Digital Effects:
Todd-Ao
Main Title Design:
Tony Silver Film
Associates &
Elizabeth Beloff

Music Composer and Conductor
Jerry Goldsmith

Orchestrations
Arthur Morton
Alexander Courage

Music Supervisor
Jellybean Benitez

Music Editors
Kenneth Hall
Darrell Hall

Songs/Music Extracts
"Original Sin (Theme from 'The Shadow')"
by Jim Steinman,
performed by Taylor
Dayne; "Some Kind

of Mystery" by Dianne
Warren, performed by
Sinoia; "Cobalt Stomp"
"Bart's Rescue" by
Dennis Dreith

Supervising Sound Editor
Martin Maryska

Sound Effects Editors
John Benson
Richard King
Jay Wilkinson

Dialogue Editors
E. Jeane Putnam
Karen Wilson
Larry Mann
Jeff Bushelman

Supervising ADR Editor
Allen Hartz

ADR Editors
Lauren Palmer
Laura Graham
Shelly Hinton

ADR Mixer
Weldon Brown

Supervising Foley Editor
Christopher Flick

Foley Editors
Donald Sylvestre
Phil Linson

Foley Mixer
David Jobe

Sound Mixers
Keith Wester
Music:
Bruce Botnick

Sound Re-recordinists
Gary Bourgeois
Brad Sherman
Don Digrolamo

Foley Artists
Alicia Stevenson
Zane Bruce

Stunt Co-ordinator
Dick Ziker

Insect Wrangler
David Mirsky

Cast
Alec Baldwin
Lamont Cranston/
The Shadow
John Lone
Shiwan Khan
Penelope Ann Miller
Margo Lane
Peter Boyle
Moe Shrevnitz
Ian McKellen
Reinhardt Lane
Tim Curry
Farley Claymore
Jonathan Winters
Barth
Sab Shimono
Dr Tam
Andre Gregory
Burbank
Brady Tsurutani
Tulku
James Hong
Li Peng
Arsenio "Sonny" Trinidad
Wu
Joseph Maher
Isaac Newbold
John Kapelos
Duke Rollins
Max Wright
Berger
Aaron Lustig
Doctor
Ethan Phillips
Nelson
Sinoia
Singer
Rudolph Willrich
Verlon Edwards
Walters
Wesley Mann
Bellboy
Joe d'Angerio
English Johnny
Larry Joshua
Maxie
Larry Hankin
Taxi Driver
Woon Park
Brian Khaw
Nathan Jung
Tibetan Kidnappers
Al Leong
Tibetan Driver
Gerald Okamura
Tibetan Passenger
Fred Sanders
Cop
Alix Elias
Woman in Taxi

Abraham Benrubi
Steve Hytner
Marine Guards
Lily Mariye
Mrs Tam
Patrick Fischler
Jeff Cahill
John L. Weaver
Sailors
Kate McGregor-Stewart
Mrs Shrevnitz
Michel Hodge
Roland Brown
Inmates
Billy Wong
Kraigh Kishi
Toshihiro Obata
Garret T. Sato
Darryl Chan
James Lew
Stuart Quan
Woon Park
Dan Koji
Jen Sung Outerbridge
Al Goto
Nils Allen Stewart
Leo Lee
Mongols

James Katsuyuki Taenaka
Bruce Locke
Cranston Guards
Tera Tabrizi
Cristina Lawson
Chi-en Telemaque
Donna Lew
Concubines
Raul Reformina
Chinese Man
Kathy Lee Doherty
Chinese Woman
James Alan
Paper Boy
Linda Atkinson
Madam
Keith A. Wester
Radio Announcer
Frank Welker
Voice of Phurba

9,699 feet
108 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
De Luxe

Tibet, the 1930s. Under the name Ying Ko, American Lamont Cranston has become a criminal warlord. Abducted by the Tulku, a holy man, Cranston is taught to renounce evil and use latent psychic powers. Seven years later, Cranston returns to New York and becomes The Shadow, a vigilante who uses a network of agents and his ability to make himself invisible to fight crime. The last descendant of Genghis Khan, Shiwan Khan – who has also studied under the Tulku – comes to New York, vowing to use his powers to become ruler of the world. Cranston meets Margo Lane, a socialite with whom he has a telepathic bond. Khan offers Cranston a partnership, claiming that he has killed their teacher and reasserted his own evil inclinations, but Cranston resists temptation.

When Margo's scientist father is enslaved by Khan, she comes to Cranston for help, realising he is The Shadow. Cranston deduces that Dr Lane's work, combined with an unstable element in Khan's possession and a device invented by Farley Claymore, can be used to create an atomic bomb. Cranston visits Claymore, who has willingly joined Khan, and is left to drown in a sealed chamber. Cranston uses his mental link with Margo to summon her to his rescue. Khan threatens to destroy New York unless a huge ransom is paid, and Cranston realises his enemy has managed to hypnotise the city into not seeing the Hotel Monolith, his headquarters. Cranston enters the hotel just as the device is being triggered and, summoning all his powers, defeats Khan. Dr Lane, freed of the spell, defuses the bomb. Khan, stabbed in the hand, loses his powers. Khan is confined in an asylum and Cranston turns his powers of fascination on Margo.

In the cycle of super-hero movies, *The Shadow*, which opts for faithful reconstruction of period and milieu rather than adapting its characters to the demands of contemporary audiences, seems likely to join the ranks of also-rans such as *The Rocke-*

ter and *Dick Tracy*. Originally a radio character who narrated crime stories, The Shadow was transformed in 1931 by author Walter Gibson (writing as Maxwell Grant) into a crime fighter with the ability to "cloud men's minds". The Shadow returned to radio (voiced by a young Orson Welles) in this form, also turning up in a few minor films and a 1940 serial featuring the hawk-nosed Victor Jory as Cranston.

Though clumsily plotted, *The Shadow* displays considerable bravura as it trots out the hero's best-known exploits. He is glimpsed first in eerie outline tormenting gangsters, a great tracking shot revealing Alec Baldwin as the slouch-hatted and scarved figure of the pulp covers, reaching for his gleaming twin automatic pistols. Due attention is also paid to trademarks such as The Shadow's chilling laugh and catch phrases ("The weed of crime bears bitter fruit" and "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?").

At the time the original stories were written, Hollywood was loath to make pulp super-productions and Irving Thalberg was unlikely to have predicted that it would be *The Shadow* rather than *Anthony Adverse* that would be remade in the 90s (though it was apparently MGM's 1932 *Mask of Fu Manchu* that inspired Gibson to create the character of Shiwan Khan). Nicely over-acted all round (even if Baldwin's black-fingernails turn as Ying Ko doesn't quite come off), with a pleasing period look and suitably outrageous perils, this Shadow movie, displaying the big special effects the original serials could never manage, would have delighted fans in 1937.

Nevertheless, this remake never really rises above mere pastiche. While the *Batman* films (live and animated), television's *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, and the shape-shifting *The Mask* demonstrate that the comic-book formula can still be reinvented in interesting ways, *The Shadow* remains slick second-hand pulp.

Kim Newman



Who knows? Miller, Baldwin

Sleep With Me

USA 1994

Director: Rory Kelly

Certificate
18
Distributor
First Independent
Production Company
August Entertainment
in association with
Paribas Film
Corp./Revolution Films
presents
A Joel Castleberg
Production
Executive Producer
Joel Castleberg
Producers
Michael Steinberg
Roger Hedden
Eric Stoltz
Line Producer
Rana Joy Glickman
Production Co-ordinator
Daren Hicks
Location Manager
Greg Bartlett
Assistant Directors
Fernando Altschul
Kelly Kiernan
Michael Hamm
Casting
Ellie Kanner
Screenplay
Duane Dell'Amico
Roger Hedden
Neal Jimenez
Joe Keenan
Rory Kelly
Michael Steinberg
Script Supervisor
Barbara Tuss
Director of Photography
Andrzej Sekula
Editor
David Moritz
Production Designer
Randy Eriksen
Art Director
J. Michael Gorman
Set Decorator
Adam Mead Faletti
Costume Design
Isis Mussenden
Make-up
Kathleen Karridene
Hairstylist
Jori Jene
Music
David Lawrence
Sound Mixer
Giovanni Di Simone

Cast
Eric Stoltz
Joseph
Meg Tilly
Sarah
Craig Sheffer
Frank
Todd Field
Duane
Susan Traylor
Deborah
Dean Cameron
Leo
Thomas Gibson
Nigel
Togan West
Rory
Amaryllis Borrego
Amy
Parker Posey
Athena
Joey Lauren Adams
Lauren
Vanessa Angel
Marianne
Adrienne Shelly
Pamela
Quentin Tarantino
Sid
June Lockhart
Caroline
David Kriegel
Josh
Lewis Arquette
Minister
Adelaide Miller
Blonde Actress
Alexandra Hedison
Brunette Actress
David Kirsch
Agent Trainee
Phil Brock
Agent

8,460 feet
94 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour

Joseph, Frank and Sarah, three young friends, are driving back to Los Angeles after a road trip. They pull in to a garage, where Joseph proposes to Sarah and she accepts. The day before the wedding, Frank accompanies Sarah on a walk along the beach. They mull over the past and Sarah reveals that there was a time when she had hoped they would become a couple. She kisses Frank under the pier. A few weeks later, Joseph, Frank and their friends are playing their regular game of poker. There is tension between Joseph and Frank. When Frank ups the ante, Joseph, a struggling garden designer, can't afford to stay in the hand. He throws down his cards in disgust and walks off.

At a barbecue, Frank has borrowed a video camera and is wandering around, filming guests and asking them searching questions. He eventually corners Sarah and reveals that he is obsessed by her. Soon afterwards, Frank throws a dinner party. After the meal, the guests, including Joseph and Sarah, are sitting around making small



Shacked up, sacked out: Sheffer, Tilly, Stoltz

talk, when Frank blurts out that he loves Sarah and kisses her. The party breaks up in disarray.

Joseph and Sarah's English friend Nigel has invited them round to meet his formidable mother-in-law. Frank has turned up uninvited with his new girlfriend Pamela in tow. As Frank and Sarah remonstrate about the dinner party, Joseph strikes up a conversation with a woman he meets in the kitchen. He leaves with her. Frank offers to drive Sarah home. They drop off a confused Pamela on the way, and end up making love. Joseph, meanwhile, stops himself at the last minute from committing adultery with the beautiful stranger.

The final party of the year is thrown by Duane, who has just sold a film script. Frank, in disgrace with his friends, has not been invited. He tries to gatecrash so he can see Sarah, but is turned away at the door. He creeps round the house, climbs in through a window, and eventually corners Sarah in the bathroom. He asks her to come outside to his car to talk to him. As he waits for her, Joseph confronts him. A slanging match breaks out between the three friends. It ends with Sarah jumping in the car and driving off. However, she stops at the lights. Joseph runs after her.

"A movie about a group of friends," as Rory Kelly has described his debut movie, *Sleep With Me* is more than a little self-regarding. The script was fashioned by six writers - among them Kelly and Michael Steinberg, who made *Bodies, Rest & Motion* - and involves its lead characters wandering between various social gatherings, working through their emotional problems en route. Those concerned are slightly older versions of *Beverly Hills 90210* types - pampered, good-looking, with a veneer of cynicism and preoccupied with nothing so much as themselves. They're all aware of how clever and photogenic they are, seem intent on capturing as much of their lives on videotape as possible. It's little wonder the film has the feel of a glorified home movie - there is an improvised quality to much of the acting, and the narrative does not so much flow as jolt along, with inter-titles to bridge awkward gaps. There is

no real sense of milieu: characters converge on each other's houses and backyards, but the outside world rarely intrudes. Kids, the old and the ugly are kept out of frame.

In a perverse way, this narrowness is part of the film's strength. By setting the action in a hermetically sealed community, Kelly creates a suitably oppressive backcloth for the main drama - the tortuous love triangle between Frank, Joseph and Sarah. Relationships in this community are conducted in a rigorously superficial way, and emotions are only ever expressed ironically or flippantly. The freewheeling, seemingly relaxed Californians turn out to have their own norms of behaviour. In their way, they're as censorious as the priggish, uptight New Englanders of *The Age of Innocence*. When Frank threatens the harmony of the group, they all close ranks against him.

Inevitably, the six discrete segments vary in tone and quality. Comedy and mawkish drama do not always gel and there are moments, notably when video cameras are around, at which characters plumb the depths of pretentiousness. It is not always clear whether Kelly wants to celebrate or satirise the attitudes and antics of the group. But there is some blisteringly funny dialogue along the way; Meg Tilly, Craig Sheffer and Eric Stoltz manage to look suitably anguished without becoming too earnest, and Kelly isn't afraid to crank up the dramatic tension by registering pauses and embarrassed silences. There are also some nicely judged character turns from the likes of Thomas Gibson and Hal Hartley regular Adrienne Shelley.

It was a mistake, though, to allow Quentin Tarantino his cameo. The machine-gun way he rattles off his monologue about *Top Gun* - "the story of a man's struggle with his homosexuality" - leaves the rest of the cast looking lumbering. His reading of Tony Scott's film could apply to this movie too: if *Top Gun* is a love story between Tom Cruise and Val Kilmer, it could just as well be argued that the relationship that really matters in *Sleep With Me* is the one between Eric Stoltz and Craig Sheffer, and that this is nothing but an old-fashioned buddy story at heart.

Geoffrey Macnab

Sparrow

Italy 1993

Director: Franco Zeffirelli

Certificate
12
Distributor
Rank
Production Companies
PolyGram Filmed
Entertainment
Cecchi Gori Group
In association with
Nippon Film
Development
& Finance
Executive Producers
Officina
Cinematografica
Tiger Film
Producers
Mario Cecchi Gori
Vittorio Cecchi Gori
Associate Producer
Pippo Pisciotto
Production Manager
Nicola Mastroioli
Assistant Directors
Justin Muller
Marco Gandini
Massimo Luconi
Sean Simeons
Casting
Emma Style
R. Bertoni
B. Lynar
Screenplay
Allan Baker
Franco Zeffirelli
Story
Based on the novel
A Sparrow's Tale by
Giovanni Verga
Continuity
Angela Allen
Director of Photography
Ennio Guarnieri
Camera Operator
Michele Cristiani
Editor
Richard Marden
Art Director
Giantito Burchiellaro
Set Design
Raimonda Gaetani
Special Effects
Franco Ragusa
Costume Design
Piero Tosi
Make-up
Franco Corridoni
Hair
Maria Teresa Corridoni
Alberta Giuliani
Music
Claudio Capponi
Alessio Vlad
Music Performed by
Orchestra Accademia
Musicale Italiana
Orchestrations
Riccardo Biseo
Claudio Capponi
Alessio Vlad

Music Adviser
Donato Salone
Sound
Godfrey Kirby
Sound Editor
Nick Stevenson
Cast
Angela Bettis
Maria
Jonathan Schaech
Nino
Sara-Jane Alexander
Annetta
Andrea Cassar
Gigi
John Castle
Giuseppe
Valentina Cortese
Mother Superior
Sinead Cusack
Matilde
Frank Finlay
Father Nunzio
Mia Fothergill
Giuditta
Pat Heywood
Sister Teresa
Janet Maw
Tecla
Denis Quilley
Baron Cesaro
Vanessa Redgrave
Sister Agata
Annabel Ryan
Filomena
Gareth Thomas
Corrado
Sheherazade Ventura
Marianna
Claudio Coliva
Don Hodson
Isabella Libra
Mariella Lo Sardo
David Maunsell
Marina Ninchi
M. Grazia Privitera
Fabio Galluzzo
Caterina Intellisano
Barbara Livi
Laura Marconi
Salvatore Murabito
Donald O'Brien
Santo Santonocito
Leonardo Sicurello

9,563 feet
106 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Eastman Color
English Version
Italian Title:
Storia di una capinera

Catania, Sicily, 1854. With cholera threatening the city, the Mother Superior of the convent is ordered to send her novices back to their homes. Among them is 19-year-old Maria Vizzini, leaving the convent for the first time in twelve years. Her father Giuseppe escorts her to the family villa near Mount Etna where he lives with Maria's stepmother Matilde, her step-sister Giuditta and young step-brother. Staying nearby are the Valentini family, also taking refuge from Catania. To her confusion, Maria finds herself attracted to their son Nino.

Nino, who is studying to be a lawyer, is likewise drawn to Maria, though during a picnic expedition to Etna they are too shy to admit their feelings. But ►

◀ when both families go to a party, Maria stays home and Nino comes back to find her. They acknowledge their love, but Maria refuses to abandon her vocation. Alone, she prays for strength.

With the plague over, the Valentinis return to Catania and Maria to her convent. She is assigned to look after the deranged Sister Agata, who years ago went crazy after renouncing her lover. Maria's family come to visit, with the news that Nino is engaged to Giuditta. Maria's health declines, but she struggles from her sick bed to watch the wedding. Nino and Giuditta move into an apartment within view of the convent. Fearing she will become mad like Agata, Maria flees to Nino's apartment. They confess their undying love for each other before he leads her back to the convent. Despairingly, she takes her final vows.

● Franco Zeffirelli is well known for dividing his time between directing films and directing operas; you can't help wondering if he's noticed the difference. At all events, he loads his cinema with all the values of nineteenth-century Italian *dramma per musica*: throbbing, primary emotions; one-motive characters; grand histrionic gestures; local and period colour by the cartload. Subjects with a robust narrative structure – *Romeo and Juliet*, for example – can withstand this sort of treatment, and in theory Giovanni Verga's work should be well suited to it: Verga did after all furnish the basis of one of the key *verismo* operas, *Cavalleria Rusticana*. But *A Sparrow's Tale* is one of his slighter, wistfully sentimental stories, and under all the Zeffirellian sugar-icing and whipped cream, the poor thing ignominiously collapses.

A strong pair of leads might have redeemed matters, but Zeffirelli has long preferred to feature dewy adolescents of limited talent. As Nino, Jonathon Schaech looks handsome – darkly, tenderly or yearningly as required – while Angela Bettis' Maria adopts a look of wide-eyed wonderment that amply explains her step-mother's aversion to her. The dialogue isn't merely banal, but says everything several times over. "I want to travel," announces Nino, outlining his ambitions. "To see the world," he adds helpfully. "Palermo, Rome, Paris," he elaborates. Oh, that sort of travel.

To give Zeffirelli his due, he possesses the confidence of his own vulgarity to an almost magnificent degree; there's nothing half-hearted about him. The passion of his pallid pair of lovers is shamelessly compared to the eruption of Etna, then crowned by a thunderstorm – and he cranks up yet another storm for their final parting. Over the whole confection an opulent score, sounding at moments oddly like pastiche Elgar, is poured like hot butterscotch sauce. Zeffirelli once described himself – in all apparent seriousness – as "a flag-bearer in the crusade against bad taste". Practitioners of bad taste can rest easy: with enemies like this, who needs friends?

Philip Kemp

Trois Couleurs: Rouge (Three Colours: Red)

France/Switzerland/Poland 1994

Director: Krzysztof Kieslowski

Certificate
15

Distributor
Artificial Eye

Production Company

MK2 Productions SA

(Paris)/France 3

Cinema (Paris)/

CAB Productions SA

(Lausanne)/"TOR"

Production (Warsaw)

In association with

Canal +

Television Suisse

Romande (TSR)

With financial

assistance from

Le Fonds Eurimages of

le Conseil de l'Europe

L'Office Fédéral de la

Culture Suisse du

Département Fédéral

de l'Intérieur

Executive Producer

Yvon Crenn

Producer

Marin Karmitz

Director of Production

Gérard Ruey

Assistant Director

Emmanuel Finkiel

Casting

Margot Capelier

Screenplay

Krzysztof Kieslowski

Krzysztof Piesiewicz

Script Supervisor

Geneviève Dufour

Director of Photography

Piotr Sobocinski

Steadicam Operator

Ricardo Brunner

Editor

Jacques Witta

Set Design

Claude Lenoir

Costume Design

Corinne Jorry

Costumes

Nadia Cuenoid

Véronique Michel

Make-up/Hairstylists

Nathalie Turner

Catherine Zingg

Music

Zbigniew Preisner

Van Den Budenmayer

Music Performed by

Warsaw Sinfonia

Conductor:

Wojciech Michniewski

Orchestra

Symphonique de

Katowice

Conductor:

Zdzisław Szostak

Soprano:

Elżbieta Tównicka

The Philharmonic

Choir of Silesia

Choirmaster:

Jan Wojtacha

Guitar:

Janusz Strobel

Cellist:

Jerzy Kłoczek

Additional Music

Bertrand Lenclos

Choreography

Brigitte Matteuzzi

Sound

Jean-Claude Laureux

Sound Editors

Piotr Zawadzki

Francine Lemaitre

Jean-Claude Laureux

Nicolas Naegelen

Sound Executive Producer

Halina Laciak

Sound Mixer

William Flageolet

Sound Effects

Jean-Paul Lelong

Mario Melchiorri

Vincent Arnardi

Stunts

Lucien Abbet

Philippe Calame

Silvio Stoppa

Cast

Irene Jacob

Valentine Dussaut

Jean-Louis Trintignant

Judge Joseph Kern

Frédérique Feder

Karin

Jean-Pierre Lorit

Auguste Bruner

Samuel Leblanc

Photographer

Marion Stalens

Vetinary Surgeon

Teco Celio

Barman

Bernard Escalon

Record Dealer

Jean Schlegel

Neighbour

Elzbieta Jasinska

Woman

Paul Vermeulen

Karin's friend

Jean-Marie Daunas

Theatre Manager

Roland Carey

Drug Dealer

Brigitte Paul

Cecile Tanner

Leo Ramseyer

Anne Theurillat

Nader Farman

Neige Dolski

Jessica Korinek

Marc Autheman

Juliette Binoche

Julie Delpy

Benöt Régent

Zbigniew Zamachowski

8,934 feet

99 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles



Sensitive skin: Irène Jacob

● Valentine Dussaut, a model, and Auguste Bruner, a law student, live near each other in Geneva and their paths frequently cross, though they don't know each other. Valentine's boyfriend Michel is a film-maker currently based in London, and the separation is straining their relationship. Auguste, who is preparing for his final exams, is having an affair with Karin, a slightly older woman who runs a telephone weather-forecast service.

One night Valentine accidentally runs over and injures a dog. Finding an address on its collar she takes the animal – an Alsatian bitch called Rita – back to its owner. He proves to be a retired judge, Joseph Kern, who tells her to do what she likes with the dog. Having had Rita's injuries attended to, Valentine learns the dog is pregnant and adopts her. One day Rita runs away. Valentine follows her back to Kern's house, where she discovers that the judge, an elderly and embittered man, spends his time tapping his neighbours' phones.

Initially disgusted, Valentine gradually becomes intrigued by Kern, realising that what motivates him is a desperate attempt to understand other people. For her part, she confides her own concerns: uneasiness about Michel, worry about her mother who is old and lonely, and her younger brother who is on drugs. Kern decides to denounce himself, and is prosecuted. Auguste, having passed his exams, is involved in the case. Karin goes to meet him at court, but encounters another man and starts an affair with him. Tormented with jealousy, Auguste spies on them making love.

Kern recognises in Auguste a counterpart of himself when young. When Valentine announces her intention of visiting Michel in London, Kern manoeuvres her into taking the same cross-Channel ferry on which Auguste is travelling. Although the forecast (according to Karin's weather service) is for fine weather, a tremendous storm blows up and the ferry capsizes. Only a handful of passengers survive: they include Julie and Olivier (from *Blue*), Karol and Dominique (*White*), and Valentine and Auguste. Kern, sur-

rounded by Rita's puppies, sees on television an image of Valentine and Auguste standing side by side.

● Connections, misconceptions, coincidences and crossed lines: Kieslowski's films are full of them, and *Three Colours Red* even more than most. The film starts with a phone call whose electronic path (borrowing an idea from Truffaut's *Baisers volés*) the camera tracks along ducts and under the ocean – only for it to remain unanswered at the other end. All the film's main characters are phone freaks: Karin makes her living by phone, and Auguste has to dial her weather service to contact her; the judge taps into other people's calls; Valentine and Michel not only conduct their whole affair by phone, but constantly debate who called whom when and what they were doing at the time. In the background, meanwhile, anonymous extras dart in and out of phone booths, ceaselessly trying to get through. The impression is of a society desperate to make contact, but achieving it for the most part indirectly if at all.

"I feel there's something important happening around me," muses Valentine, "and it scares me." As before in *The Double Life of Véronique*, Irène Jacob conveys a sensibility operating at full stretch, picking up vibrations she's scarcely conscious of. (The huge advertising poster on which her face appears is not pasted up, but stretched taut on fabric over a frame.) But receptivity is a two-way process – it also transmits. Valentine's openness to life infects the judge (Trintignant's very skin seems dried out by self-loathing) and entices him out of his misanthropy – just as in *Blue*, Olivier and the stripper Lucille between them lured Julie from her numbed seclusion.

Liberty, equality and fraternity, as Kieslowski himself hinted, prove something of a red (white and blue) herring: the films' true theme emerges as social cohesion, the interdependence that links us to each other whether we like it or not. In each film someone tries to opt out. The widowed Julie (*Blue*) retreats into isolation; Karol (*White*) turns himself into a ruthless entrepreneur;

in *Red* Kern sets up as God, spying on and controlling the lives of others. In the end each one is drawn back into the common flow, yielding to the pull of emotions and mutual ties. Common to all three films is the incident of a stooped old person struggling to push a bottle into a bottle bank, disregarded in *Blue* and *White* by Julie and Karol respectively. In *Red* the image is resolved as Valentine, the trilogy's warmest and most positive character, goes to help. The message adapts Auden: we must help one another or die.

But if *Red* works well enough on this redemptive level, it may be too superficial a reading; it's always risky to take Kieslowski ("Things are very rarely said straight out in my films") at face value. *Red* ostensibly rounds off the whole trilogy with a neat happy ending, but the closer one looks at it the more the ironies obtrude. For a start, just how "happy" is it for 1400 people to drown so that two strangers can meet? And can we assume from that final freeze-frame of Auguste and Valentine that they'll fall in love, or even notice each other? Kern may want to think so, and so may we, but there's precious little evidence for the idea. Kieslowski goes further, piling on the implausibilities: both couples from *Blue* and *White* turn up among the survivors – as if to mock our desire for a cosily romantic conclusion.

Viewed end-on from this sceptical angle, *Red* starts to unravel backwards – or rather to re-ravel into a different pattern. Maybe the whole ending is in the mind of the judge, still yearning to manipulate the lives of those around him? An outrageous series of coincidences links Kern with Auguste – both dropped a law-book that opened at the perfect exam question, both spied on their lover in bed with another man. Taken literally, this would be tricksily over-contrived: but not if we accept that the two men, like Véronique and Veronika, are each other's doubles – only this time with a 40-year slippage. Kern and Valentine are soul-mates, and but for the age discrepancy they should have been lovers. With Auguste as the judge's surrogate (or his wish-fulfilment?), they can be.

Like all Kieslowski's films, *Red* is an elusive artefact, refracting different dramatic and emotional patterns according to viewpoint. As the third part of a trilogy it also casts new light on its predecessors, and anyone seeing it may well feel tempted to check out *Blue* and *White* again to see how they've changed. That would be worth doing, if only to enjoy the deftly contrasted visual games played with the three keynote colours. After the melancholy saturations of blue and the orgasmic flashes of white, red in the latest film serves as a focal point within each frame, picking out a jeep or a jacket, a girder or a flashing light. And if the technique occasionally recalls a Marlboro ad, Kieslowski is there before us: in one scene he has Auguste come home holding a carton of cigarettes. No prizes for guessing which brand.

Philip Kemp

War of the Buttons

United Kingdom/France 1993

Director: John Roberts

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Companies

Enigma Films (UK)/
Productions de
la Guéville (France)

Executive Producers

Xavier Gélín
Stéphane Marsil

Producer

David Puttnam

Line Producer

David Nichols

Associate Producer

Steve Norris

Production Associate

Patsy Pollock

Production Co-ordinator

Cate Arbeid

Production Manager

Gerry Twomey

Location Managers

Liz Kerry

Arthur Dunne

Post-production

Supervisor

John Trehy

2nd Unit Director

Margy Kinmonth

Assistant Directors

Mark Egerton

Emma Pounds

Natasha Ross

Nick Heckstall-Smith

Casting

Ros Hubbard

John Hubbard

Screenplay

Colin Welland

Based on the novel

La Guerre des boutons

by Louis Pergaud

Script Supervisor

Jacqueline Gamard

Script Editor

Jane Wittekind

Director of Photography

Bruno de Keyzer

Camera Operators

Dominique Pinto

Sean Corcoran

Steadicam Operator

Peter Cavacuiti

Special Visual Effects

Editor

Russ Woolnough

Opticals

Magic Camera

Company

Filmoptic

Supervising Editor

Jim Clark

Editor

David Freeman

Production Designer

Jim Clay

Art Director

Chris Seagers

Set Dresser

Judy Farr

Scenic Artists

Brian Bishop

Douglas Bishop

Storyboard Artist

John Greaves

Special Effects Supervisor

Peter Hutchinson

Special Effects

Kevin Draycott

Costume Design

Louise Frogley

Wardrobe Supervisor

John Scott

Make-up

Dominique Henri-Plez

Patricia Kirkman

Hairstylists

Joelle Dominique

Jacqueline Stufflell

Title Design

Plume Partners

Music

Rachel Portman

Song

"Life Shrinks" by
and performed by
Elvis Costello

Supervising Sound Editor

Ian Fuller

Sound Mixer

David John

Sound Recordists

Ray Cross

Liam Saurin

Sound Re-recordists

John Hayward

Nic Le Messurier

David Anderson

Sound Effects Editor

John Ireland

Stunt Co-ordinator

Greg Powell

Cast

Gregg Fitzgerald

Fergus

Gerard Kearney

Big Con

Darragh Naughton

Boffin

Brendan McNamara

Tim

Kevin O'Malley

Fishy

John Cleere

Peter

Anthony Cunningham

Little Con

Thomas Kavanagh

Riley

Eveanna Ryan

Marie

John Crowley

Pat

Stuart Dannel Foran

Tich

Danielle Tuite

Fionnuala

Helen O'Leary

Helen

Yvonne McNamara

Maeve

John Coffey

Geronimo

Paul Batt

Gorilla

Karl Byrne

Mickey Moon

Barry Walsh

Willie

Niall Collins

Chick

Derek O'Leary

Brendan

Rory White

Bernard

Liam Cunningham

The Master

Johnny Murphy

Jonjo

Colm Meaney

Geronimo's Dad

Bairbre Dowling

Geronimo's Mum

Alan Devlin

Mr Riley

Brid McCarthy

Mrs Riley

Pat Laffan

Mr Connor

Ruth Hegarty

Mrs Connor

Ger Ryan

Fergus' Mum

John Olohan

Fat Pat's Dad

Frank Kelly

Gorilla's Dad

Martin Dunne

Willie's Dad

Andrew Goyvaerts

Gerard

Frank Grimes

Christian Brother

Donncha Crowley

Maurice O'Donoghue

Police Sergeants

Frank O'Sullivan
Eamonn Hunt
Fishermen
Jack Lynch
Mr Riley's Friend
Declan Mulholland
Priest
Maureen Bennett
Master's Wife
Helene Montague
Tich's Mum
Brendan Caldwell
Carrickdowse Priest
Dervla Kirwan
Marie's Voice

8,467 feet
94 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Eastman Color
Prints by
Technicolor

County Cork, Ireland, the 1970s.

The young boys of Ballydowse (the Ballys), led by Fergus, and of Carrickdowse (the Carricks), led by Geronimo, have been at war with each other for as long as either side can remember. After a battle in a nearby forest, the Ballys capture Gorilla, Geronimo's thuggish brother, and cut off all his buttons. The Carricks retaliate by capturing Fergus, and not only do they divest him of his buttons, but also taunt him about his illegitimate birth.

Fergus' stepfather beats him for ruining his clothes and threatens to send him away if he gets into more trouble. At the next battle, the Ballys win by leaping naked from behind rocks. Emboldened by their victory, the Ballys attempt to earn as much money as they can in order to buy more buttons and fix up their headquarters, an abandoned barn. One boy, Reilly, is ejected from the gang for failing to pull his weight, and he resolves to get even.

Inspired after learning about a famous battle in Irish history, the Ballys triumph over the Carricks when Fergus arrives at the Carricks' fort on a horse and captures Geronimo, who, cuts off all his own buttons in capitulation. The Bally's celebration is cut short when Geronimo bulldozes their headquarters with Reilly's father's new tractor. Unjustly blamed for the damage, Fergus goes on the run.

Geronimo finds him hiding in the hills, and together they flee the posse of villagers by climbing a steep mountain. When Geronimo slips, Fergus saves his life, and both are sent to a reform school to learn a lesson. Years later Marie, Fergus' sweetheart and fellow gang member, marries one of them while the other becomes their best friend.

War of the Buttons is modest, parent-friendly entertainment, a likeable children's film that never descends into childishness. Boasting neither pyrotechnic feats of slapstick in the John Hughes tradition, nor the sort of worthy pedigree sported by last year's *The Secret Garden*, it steers the middle ground comfortably at a medium pace. Given producer David Puttnam's reputation, this film could easily have degenerated into sentimental drivel, but instead manages to be child-centric without patronising its core audience. The main characters stand up as believable specimens of rural youth – innocent, but not angelic, slightly salty but not annoyingly precocious. For example, the scene where a young boy is sent to call

the local priest a "tosspot" in order to find out how bad a swear word it is could have been played for cuteness, but the script and direction are light enough to pull it off.

Conversely, the violence and cruelty of childhood is not skimmed here, as when one gang threatens to castrate a hostage. Directing his first feature after winning plaudits for his graduation film, *This Boy's Life*, John Roberts again shows a talent for handling young actors who deliver remarkable performances. The sensitivity with which he portrays a child's view of the world recalls early Truffaut and Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite*, with the latter's image of a pillow-fight arrested in mid-motion specifically alluded to.

The film-makers have decided to eschew the French provincial background of the original novel, *La Guerre des boutons*, in favour of an Irish setting. They serve up the obligatory ration of cuddly Hibernian drunkenness and country dance merry-making, and as with most films set on the Celtic fringe, there's a certain hagiogeographic sensibility underlying the loving long shots of the landscape. Considering the lucrative business opportunities the Irish government is offering film-makers these days, perhaps it's only fair that they should show the country in a glowing light.

But scratch a little deeper, and something more topical is afoot. In the original novel, set in the 40s, the war of the buttons was overshadowed by the more deadly war in the world beyond. The transposition to Ireland in the 70s, when the war in the North was hotting up, adds an extra subtextual spin even though the period details are sparingly used. At school, where portraits of the martyrs of 1916 hang on the wall, the boys learn about democracy and the Irish language. The rhetoric of Republicanism tinges their battle cries while the only real baddie of the piece, the traitor Reilly, shouts Loyalist slogans in defiance. Considering that at the time of writing a ceasefire now holds in Ireland, the film's peaceful outcome seems both apt and hopeful.

Leslie Felperin Sharman



Small change: Fitzgerald, Ryan

RE-RELEASE

Lancelot du Lac

France/Italy 1974

Director: Robert Bresson

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Company

Mara Films

Laser Production

Gerico Sound

ORTF

Producer

Jean Yanne

Jean-Pierre Rassam

Associate Producers

Michel Choquet

Jean-Pierre Rassam

François Rochas

Production Director

Michel Choquet

Production Manager

Jean Pieuchot

Assistant Directors

Myliène van der Mersch

Bernard Cohen

Robert Baroody

Gilles Bérault

Screenplay

Robert Bresson

Director of Photography

Pasquale de Santis

Editor

Germaine Lamy

Art Director

Pierre Charbonnier

Set Decorator

Pierre Cadour

Special Effects

Alain Bryce

Costume Design

Gres

Costume Supervisor

Geneviève Cortier

Make-up

Elinor Marcus

Music

Philippe Sarda

Choreography

Yvan Chiffre

Sound

Bernard Bats

Sound Recordist

Jacques Carrère

Sound Effects

Daniel Couteau

Stunt Co-ordinator

Yvan Chiffre

Armourer

Billy Calloway

Cast

Luc Simon

Lancelot du Lac

Laura Duke Condominas

Guinevere (Guinevere)

Humbert Balsan

Gauvain (Gawain)

Vladimir Antokch-Oresek

Artus (Arthur)

Patrick Bernard

Mordred

Arthur de Montalembert

Lionel

Joseph Patrick Le Quidre

Charles Balsan

Christian Schlumberger

Jean-Paul Laperlier

Guy de Bernis

Philippe Chleq

Jean-Marie Bécar

Antoine Rabaud

Marie-Louise Buffet

Marie-Gabrielle Cartron

7,523 feet

84 minutes

In colour

Subtitles



Landscapes after the battle: 'Lancelot du Lac'

Knights, one of them Agaravain, Gawain's brother. Compelled to avenge his brother's death, Gawain is mortally wounded by Lancelot. Lancelot reluctantly returns Guinevere to the king only under assurances that she will not be punished. Soon after, on learning that Mordred has stirred up rebellion, Lancelot returns to Arthur's camp and is among the many Knights slaughtered in the ensuing battles.

Twenty years after its original release, *Lancelot du Lac* is bound to shock, frustrate and overwhelm in equal measure, partly because of its treatment of the Arthurian Myth and the trappings of Camelot kitsch that attach themselves to celluloid visions of the Middle Ages. By an uncomfortable coincidence, the recent press preview of *Lancelot* occurred the day after a television screening of John Boorman's *Excalibur* – truly a case of the sublime following the ridiculous – but the contrast is instructive in terms of just those expectations that Bresson has consistently sought to disown in his film-making.

In his collection of aphorisms *Notes on the Cinematographer*, Bresson names his entirely individual conception of film-making as "cinematographie... a writing with images in movement and with sounds"; and at one level *Lancelot* can be seen as the Bressonian method attaining a particular degree of refinement and consummation. All the elements normally associated with Bresson's film language are present: the use of 'models' in the place of professional actors; unemphatic and minimally expressive presences denied psychological depth and existing as human surfaces amongst what the director describes as "the visible parlance of bodies, objects, horses, roads, trees, fields"; a highly-wrought attention brought to bear on the soundtrack and an anti-dramatic attenuation of the narrative.

So much of Bresson's work takes place after the event that narrative convention would consider central. His is always an interstitial reading, on the edges of the action, privileging the ripples on the surface of the water rather

than the Lady in the Lake herself. In keeping with this tendency *Lancelot* begins at the end of the myth, with the return of the Knights who have failed in their quest for the Grail, and concentrates on Lancelot as the anguished suitor of the Queen and on the bloody decimation of the codes of chivalry. This organising principle covers not only the plot structure but extends through the arrangement of the sequences down to the manner in which individual shots are attacked.

Each of Bresson's films contains moments that stand to both crystallise and characterise such an approach: the oblique effectiveness of the shot/counter-shot exchanges in *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, the eroticised ballet of thieving, caressing hands in the Gare de Lyon sequence of *Pickpocket*, the off-screen robbery conveyed entirely through sound in *L'Argent*. Likewise, in the tournament sequence, *Lancelot* has what might be called its own ur-Bresson moment. The jousting in this sequence is conveyed through a brilliantly rhythmic montage of shots of the reaction of the spectators, of musicians piping between heats, of the raising of pennants, of the horses stamping and charging, the visible impact of lance on shield is withheld until one no longer expects to see it, by which time the impact has gathered in latent power. Sound is crucial to this sequence, as it is to the entire film, armour being sheared by the blow of a sword, the sound of the horses; these participate in an extraordinary orchestration of details, the visual and aural truly interacting.

If *Pickpocket* remains his masterpiece, *Lancelot du Lac* is proof that Bresson cannot age badly, and it is representative of an uncompromisingly singular cinematic vision – discomfiting, a little intimidating but thoroughly remarkable and unlike any other in cinema. Godard got it right when he commented that Bresson's films owe their power to "an idea of the world applied to cinema, or an idea of cinema applied to the world; ultimately it comes to the same thing". *Lancelot* is the idea given unforgettable form.

Chris Darke

RE-RELEASE

Peeping Tom

United Kingdom 1959

Director: Michael Powell

Certificate

18

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

Michael Powell

(Theatre)

Anglo Amalgamated

Productions

Producer

Michael Powell

Associate Producer

Albert Fennell

Screenplay

Leo Marks

Director of Photography

Otto Heller

Editor

Noreen Ackland

Art Director

Arthur Lawson

Music

Brian Easdale

Choreography

Rhythm Dance:

Wally Scott

Sound

C.C. Stevens

Gordon K. McCallum

Cast

Carl Boehm

Mark Lewis

Anna Massey

Helen Stephens

Maxine Audley

Mrs Stephens

Moir Shearer

Vivian

Esmond Knight

Arthur Baden

Michael Goodliffe

Don Jarvis

Shirley Anne Field

Diane Ashley

Bartlett Mullins

Mr Peters

Jack Watson

Inspector Gregg

Nigel Davenport

Sgt Miller

Certificate

Milly

Martin Miller

Dr Rosen

Brian Wallace

Tony

Brenda Bruce

Dora

Miles Malleson

Elderly Gentleman

Susan Travers

Lorraine

Maurice Durant

Publicity Chief

Brian Worth

Assistant Director

Veronica Hurst

Miss Simpson

Alan Rolfe

Store Detective

John Dunbar

Police Doctor

Guy Kinsley-Poynter

P. Tate, the Cameraman

Keith Baxter

Baxter

Peggy Thorpe-Bates

Mrs Partridge

John Barrard

Small Man

Roland Curran

Young Man Extra

John Chappell

Clapper Boy

Michael Powell

Mark's Father

Columba Powell

Mark as a child

9,789 feet

109 minutes

In colour

Eastman Color

Originally reviewed in

MFB No. 316

Mark Lewis, assistant cameraman at a film studio, approaches a Soho prostitute, Dora, follows her to her room and murders her, filming her death with his 16mm camera. Revisiting the scene next day, he films the police at work and the reactions of onlookers. Later, on the premises above a newsagent's shop, he photographs professional model Milly and scarred newcomer Lorraine in provocative poses for under-the-counter sale by the shop's owner, Mr Peters. Returning home, he finds his lodger, Helen Stephens, who lives with her blind and alcoholic mother, celebrating her twenty-first birthday. Bringing a slice of cake to his rooms, which are full of cameras and lighting equipment, she demands to see one of his films as a birthday present. He shows her footage of his childhood when his father, researching the psychology of fear, constantly tormented him and filmed his distress. Helen is both horrified and sympathetic at the treatment he has suffered.

At the film studio, where director Arthur Baden is struggling to extract an acceptable performance from 'star' actress Diane Ashley, Mark arranges an after-hours filming session with her stand-in, Vivian. He films her death, stabbed with the spiked leg of his cam-

After having failed in their quest to find the Holy Grail, the Knights of the Round Table, led by Lancelot, return to Camelot and the court of King Arthur. Lancelot, the Queen's champion, is fixed on continuing the quest and tells Guinevere that he has sworn an oath to God not to become her lover. She reminds him that there remains a previous oath from which he must first be released.

Arthur entrusts the jealous Mordred with his fear that they have provoked the wrath of God, and Lancelot – although defended against Mordred's intimations by Gawain – again begs Guinevere to release him. Although she unwillingly consents, Lancelot is tempted to arrange another rendezvous with her while Arthur and his Knights attend a jousting tournament. At the last minute, however, Lancelot changes his mind and attends the tournament, thus countering Mordred's plot to either catch him in adultery or to kill him.

At the tournament Lancelot wears neutral colours but is identified by his skill and is wounded by a lance. He rides away into the forest where he is cared for by an old peasant woman. The Knights search for him in order to refute Mordred's slanders but are convinced by a premonition of his death and the Queen's guilt. Lancelot returns to carry her off after killing two

era tripod, and hides her body in a trunk. Next day, he excitedly films Diane's collapse when the trunk is opened. The police are summoned, and Mark films their investigation, explaining that he is making a documentary. At home, Helen introduces him to her mother, who is uneasy about him; after an evening out with Helen, Mark finds Mrs Stephens in his rooms, demanding to know about the films she hears him watching each night. Screening the footage of Vivian's death, he finds it incomplete, and considers killing Mrs Stephens; he relents for Helen's sake. Unaware of her narrow escape but certain that Mark is ill, Mrs Stephens advises him to consult a specialist and meanwhile to avoid contact with Helen.

At the studio, Mark talks with a visiting psychiatrist, Dr Rosen, but finds him unhelpful. Routinely tailed by the police but unconcerned by their interest, Mark returns to the newsagent's where he has arranged another photo session with Milly, now to be his next victim. By the time her body has been discovered by Mr Peters and the police alerted, Mark has come home to find Helen watching one of his films, shocked at its contents. He reveals that all the rooms in the house are wired for sound and that his father recorded everything that went on in them. Mark shows how he continued his father's researches into fear by fitting a parabolic mirror to his camera so that his victims would see themselves die. Despite Helen's efforts to stop him, he completes his prearranged plan to die on the tripod spike himself as the police arrive. A tape from his childhood plays as they find the body.

Part of the exasperation, if not the loathing, prompted by Michael Powell's "nice, pure, beautiful film" (as he called it) when it first appeared in 1960 can be explained by sheer disorientation. From the title inwards, nothing that *Peeping Tom* delivers is quite what it promises (or threatens); if there is a logic to be traced beneath its surface of peculiar imprecision, it is that of the surviving airman (how does he survive?) in *A Matter of Life and Death* or of the family curse (is it really a blessing?) in *I Know Where I'm Going*. In other words, the film requires some indulgence from its observers in order to survive its own contradictions. Too little tolerance, and *Peeping Tom* is 'merely' about a deranged sexual perversity; too much, and it becomes – equally mysteriously – a key to the whole purpose of watching movies.

The notoriety of *Peeping Tom* as a horror film seems ill-deserved; it is resolutely understated, its death scenes unfashionably bloodless, its victims making no attempt to defend themselves despite the reasonable prospect of brushing their assailant aside. The pin-ups by which the newsagent supplements his income also have the innocent inhibition of a long-departed era, less provocative than most contemporary greetings cards. "You won't

see that in *Sight and Sound*!" exclaims the focus-puller's colleague, waving an iconic snapshot – and sure enough, this magazine pointedly ignored *Peeping Tom* on first release. But today Powell's film could no longer be interpreted on whatever pretext as a corrupting influence, an insult, or a flagrant waste of talent. Already adrift from its period, set in a London where accents and grammar still ring with the stoicism of the immediately post-war, it now reads most plausibly as compassionate fable, strangely echoing in its themes and images of possessiveness, blindness and loss another of the stories that Powell filmed without Pressburger, *The Thief of Bagdad*, back in 1940. That film, too, began with (and repeatedly returned to) a piercing gaze.

Much can be made of *Peeping Tom*'s opening shot, the eye springing open both to absorb and to attack: it can be read as both fearsome and fearful, menacing and vulnerable, both an awakening and an insight, even implying that everything to follow is imaginary, perceived only by an inner eye. Always to be found, by a sadistic stretch, in the Archers trademark (an arrow piercing the pupil of the target), the recurring Powell motif promises reward and punishment, clarity of vision offset by potential malignancy of purpose. In *Peeping Tom* it is promptly associated with the lens of the camera which, after thrusting at us furtively from folds of clothing, identifies us with the killer, not with his victim. Since we have no quarrel with the luckless Dora (although emphatically no reason to like her, either), nor do we know quite how she dies, it seems at first that a useful opportunity for clarification is offered

by the repeat of the whole sequence behind the opening credits. Powell's ingenuity, however, only leads to complications.

The monochrome version is not, in fact, a repeat of the initial encounter, which seems to be (but isn't) a single tracking shot from start to finish: it is edited from a different take, while oddly repeating the glimpse (a deliberate mistake?) of the camera unit's shadow across the shop front. This time around, Dora clutches a lamp-post in passing, fails to meet a fellow lodger on the stairs, and does not appear to speak before dying. It is puzzling that, given our understanding of the camera's position, she consistently looks us straight in the lens. But the main problems posed by this series of subtle non-sequiturs relate not to the murderer's identity, since he sits there in front of us, but to the questions of how and why the murder was committed. It takes most of the film to produce some answers, partly because the lurid device of the camera-tripod blade – a potent enough symbol, although perplexingly unwieldy and impractical – is less important than the parabolic mirror (strenuously concealed from us until the end) in which the victims see themselves, and partly because the explanation of the murderer's purpose proves to be no more than a clue to a range of deeper motivations.

Deliberately or not, *Peeping Tom* encourages distrust. What are we to make, for example, of Mark's German accent, somehow acquired since his childhood (we hear tapes of the boy's immaculate English) although he has always lived in the same house? What kind of an autumn evening, close to Firework Night, is still broad daylight

at 7 p.m., and how is it that the whole business of Milly's murder takes only as long as a postman (working unusual hours) takes to deliver a letter? Less trivially, we might wonder why Helen only meets Mark (her landlord) after she has been given, at 21, the key of the door; what might be significant about his gift of a dragonfly brooch (a reference to *Tales of Hoffmann*? a comment on the emerging adult?); and when exactly it was that Mark's 'researches' turned him into a killer. If Dora was the first, what prompted the escalation – and what did he film before? And crucially, since *Peeping Tom* contrives to be a film about sex while scarcely mentioning the subject, how does Mark's condition (contrary to Powell's "scopophilic" references, Freud's 1905 *Essay on Sexual Aberrations* in fact terms it scopophilia, regarded as a perversion only when it has replaced sex entirely) relate to his lost mother, his hated stepmother, and his father's vast collection of sound tapes?

Mark's own answer to the riddle of his behaviour admits no sexual implication. "I made them watch their own deaths," he says of his victims, "and if death has a face they saw that too." This would suggest that Mark's altruistic continuation of his father's work was driven by the need to understand the ultimate fear, in anticipation of his own demise. It is invalidated by the use of the mirror in which the women would only see a wildly distorted image, in fact a reflection of how Mark sees them. Studying their deaths on film, a documentary slowly taking on the shape of a complete Powell production, Mark is distracted from his metaphysical quest by the intervention of Helen and the 'reality' of love, neatly if ironically signalled by the insistent ringing of a bell. He has to make a choice and, since this is Powell's world, the film takes priority over the relationship; he brings his father's exhaustive project to its inevitable close.

Tinkering with Freudian theories (as Powell and Leo Marks began their collaboration by doing), a more satisfactory reading might be that as a consequence of his father-obsession Mark is jealous of his stepmother and kills off her later equivalents in order to keep his father (the real 'Peeping Tom') to himself. As sex has no part in this relationship, any sexual behaviour – such as kissing couples or posing glamour-girls – has to be suppressed and punished. At the same time, by 'becoming' his father, Mark can justify a tolerance towards Helen as a potential partner/mother, while Mrs Stephens, 'seeing' him more clearly for being blind, also has some vestige of maternal authority over him. But the enigmas of the film, like the veil that lifts across Mark's first meeting with Helen's mother, safely defy explanation. The most appropriate verdict comes after Mark's reunion with death, in the form of a splendidly ambiguous Powellian comment both on the after-life and on *Peeping Tom* itself. "There's nothing," says the expert, "to be afraid of."

Philip Strick

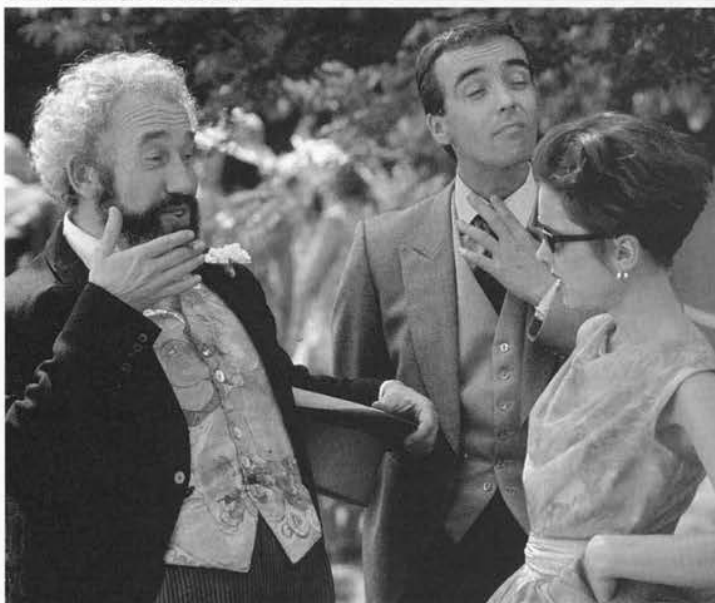


Sharp focus: Carl Boehm

video

Mark Kermode and Peter Dean highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE



Weddings a go-go: Simon Callow, John Hannah, Charlotte Coleman

Four Weddings and a Funeral

Director Mike Newell/UK 1994

Blackadder scriptwriter Richard Curtis penned this marital farce which became the surprise hit of the summer. Bemused by his acquaintance's unstoppable knot-tying, Charles (Hugh Grant) falls for, loses and finally wins an enticing American woman (Andie MacDowell) over the course of five ceremonies. En route he toys with such great imponderables as: "Why do people

marry?", "Why don't my relationships last?" and "What am I doing in this morning suit?" As in *Peter's Friends*, this quintessential English romp bristles with verbal wit, spiced up with a healthy dose of Anglo-Saxon cursing, but it is set apart by its elegant narrative structure. Curtis' script is excellent, Grant is a delight, MacDowell is uncharacteristically restrained and even serious thespian Simon Callow gets the thumbs up as the one group member who is not of the marrying kind. (S&S June 1994)

● Rental: Columbia TriStar CVT 20808; Certificate 15



A waif in love: Giulietta Masina in 'La Strada'

La Strada

Director Federico Fellini/Italy 1954

Fellini's first international success is still one of his most impressive and pessimistic works – part magical road movie, part haunting tragedy of unrequited love. Giulietta Masina plays Gelsomina, a waif sold to travelling showman Zampano (Anthony Quinn) whose act consists of breaking a chain with his heaving chest. The character of Zampano is wonderfully tragic, a man

turned into a beast because of his isolated existence and whose life, like his trick chain, has a weak link which blinds him to Gelsomina's affection. Fellini implies that Zampano's self-destruction is a result of straying too far from the surrogate family of the circus where his rival (Richard Basehart) works, a theme also explored in his earlier *Lights of Variety*. (MFB No. 264)

● Retail: Connoisseur Video CR 165; Price £15.99; Subtitles: B/W; Certificate PG

Three Colours: White (Trois Couleurs: Blanc)

Director Krzysztof Kieslowski/
France/Switzerland/Poland 1993

The second part of Kieslowski's trilogy was unfairly dismissed by some critics as lightweight farce. The opening revolves around a Polish emigré Karol Karol (Zbigniew Zamachowski) in Paris, who suffers a succession of ignominies – losing his wife Dominique (Julie Delpy), property, and dignity. However, after Karol returns to Poland (he had vowed to take Dominique with him, but ends up going alone) the film takes on greater depth. He learns to chance his luck and take others for a ride, embarking on a delirious revenge sequence that finally results in the consummation of his marriage. In a twist typical of Kieslowski, Karol eventually wins his wife's love – even though it means imprisoning her in the process. Aside from the director's obvious skill with montage, what is so refreshing about his work is the unpredictability of the narrative. (S&S June 1994)

● Retail: Artificial Eye ART 100; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15



Down and out: Zbigniew Zamachowski

The Hard Truth

Director Kristine Peterson/USA 1994

An enjoyable action-thriller which benefits from Michael Rooker's magnetic screen presence and an intriguing twist on Eric Roberts' macho persona. Suspended by the police force after killing a maniac, long-time cop Jonah (Rooker) is persuaded by his gold-digging girlfriend (Lysette Anthony) to steal \$3 million from her sleazy boss. Inevitably, the arrival of electronic whizz-kid Roberts highlights the gaping holes in the couple's relationship. The narrative is predictable, but Peterson directs with enough economical panache to keep things moving swiftly from one set-piece to the next, and the three central characters prove eminently watchable.

● Rental: Hi Fliers HFV 8275; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producers Brad Southworth, Gary DePew; Screenplay Jonathan Tydor; Lead Actors Michael Rooker, Lysette Anthony, Eric Roberts, Ray Bakker, Don Yesso

Backbeat

Director Iain Softley/UK 1993

The best British rock movie since *Flame*, this energetic romp boasts a sassy script, an authentic musical backdrop and engaging performances from the lively young cast. In the period prior to their international breakthrough, the Beatles travel to Hamburg where legendary fifth member Stuart Sutcliffe (Stephen Dorff) meets and falls in love with trendy photographer Astrid Kirchherr (Sheryl Lee). Iain Softley superbly captures the amphetamine-drenched hedonism of 60s Berlin and his concert set-pieces are, for once, exemplary (the actors look as though they really are playing their instruments). Largely overlooked in the cinema, this deserves to strike a chord on video. For maximum effect wire your video up to your hi-fi and crank up the volume. (S&S April 1994)

● Rental: Columbia TriStar CVT 20712; Certificate 15



60s snapshot: Sheryl Lee in 'Backbeat'

Necronomicon

Directors Brian Yuzna/Christophe Gans/
Shu Kaneko/USA 1993

In this portmanteau, overseen by long-standing genre hero Brian Yuzna, three H.P. Lovecraft tales ('The Rats in the Wall', 'Cool Air' and 'Whispers in the Darkness') are devoured, digested and unrecognisably regurgitated. The result, although unfaithful to Lovecraft, succeeds as an entertaining and imaginative horror romp which juggles understated atmospheric chills, extravagant cod philosophising and full blown rubbery effects. Gans' opener is visually the most impressive of the trilogy, while Kaneko's sandwich-filler about cryogenic longevity is less sure-footed, despite David Warner's charmingly ghoulish performance. However, for horror thrills Yuzna's meaty finale about brain eating extraterrestrials steals the show. (S&S September 1994)

● Rental: ITC 8335; Certificate 18



Evil tales: 'Necronomicon'



The master's world: 'Tokyo-Ga'

Tokyo-Ga

Director Wim Wenders/
West Germany/USA/Japan 1985

In this fascinating 'video diary' Wenders travels to Japan to discover the remnants of Ozu's Tokyo. Book-ended by opening and closing scenes from *Tokyo Story*, Wenders captures the same underlying pathos that runs through Ozu's work – particularly in the scenes where we glimpse Japanese life in the noisy pachinko amusement arcades, stadium-size golf driving ranges and in a factory which produces artificial food for restaurant displays. A jazzy score coupled with Wenders' keen eye for interesting visuals helps to transcend the poor definition of the video images.

Highlights include a 'chance' encounter with a rambling Werner Herzog on top of Tokyo's replica Eiffel Tower; a meeting with camera-shy Chris Marker hiding behind a menu in a bar appropriately called *La Jetée*; and an interview with Ozu's cameraman Yuharu Autsu. At the centre of the mayhem is Ozu's grave – a huge black marble tomb inscribed with just one word in Japanese – 'Nothingness'.

● Retail Premiere: Academy CAV 016; Price £15.99; Certificate U; 90 minutes; Producer/Screenplay/Narrator Wim Wenders



Danger woman: 'Romeo is Bleeding'

Romeo is Bleeding

Director Peter Medak/USA 1992

Medak's modern day *film noir* is an unruly joy, a stylishly contrived story that has at its heart enough boisterous bad behaviour to distract from the silliness of the plot. Verminous, philandering cop Jack Grimaldi (Gary Oldman in great form) lives happily on both sides of the law until he meets someone far more wicked. Lena Olin as a glamorous hit-woman gives a ball-busting *femme fatale* performance that rivals Linda Fiorentino in *The Last Seduction*. Medak takes full advantage of Olin's devastating charms – who else could kick through a car windshield wearing lingerie and stilettos. Stupid but sexy. (S&S May 1994)

● Rental: 20.20 Vision NVT 16753; Certificate 18

Sonatine

Director Takeshi Kitano/Japan 1993

Kitano both directs and takes the lead role in this tale of a gangster lieutenant who seeks refuge in a deserted beach house after several of his team are killed during a visit to Okinawa. While shades of Western and gangster movies hang over this eulogy to a contemporary yakuza, Kitano's direction is most inspired in its eschewal of genre conventions during an extraordinarily languid middle section set on the beach. Sandwiched between scenes of formalised violence, this sequence is the calm before the storm with the mobsters

sumo wrestling, playing mock Russian roulette and waiting for something to happen. As in *Violent Cop*, Kitano's character wanders expressionless through the violence, seemingly oblivious to his surroundings. This emotional detachment is also evident in Kitano's direction where he shoots the climax (during which his character kills all the major yakuza players) from outside a darkened room so that all that is visible of the carnage is a series of flashing lights. This is the final masterstroke in a film which confirms a major talent. (S&S May 1994)

● Retail: ICA Projects ICAV 1011; Price £13.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18



New Western: Takeshi Kitano in 'Sonatine'

Sunrise

Director F.W. Murnau/USA 1927

Regarded as a masterpiece of 20s cinema, *Sunrise* is primarily recognised in the annals of history as a film ahead of its time. Murnau's first American picture carries vestiges of his Expressionist past (note the design of the cafés, station and funfair in the city scenes), and boasts camera work that would put much of contemporary cinema to shame. The extended dolly shot aboard a tram which follows the lovers from the country to the city is the most famous example, but there is more to admire

with the sets, locations, fades, tracking shots and inter-titles lyrically wrapped within a tragicomic, potboiler romance. Subtitled *A Song of Two Humans*, the story follows a farmer who rediscovers his love for his wife after nearly killing her because of a fleeting desire for another woman. The only gripe is with the mediocre print quality and with an aspect ratio which results in some of the more powerful images – for example, the shot of the farmer ploughing towards the camera – becoming lost on the small screen. (MFB No. 495)

● Retail: Tartan Video TVT 1159; Price £15.99; Silent; B/W; Certificate U



Janet Gaynor and George O'Brien in Murnau's striking piece of early cinema 'Sunrise'

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Beethoven's 2nd

Director Rod Daniel; USA 1993; CIC VHA 1752; Certificate U
Unlike *Beethoven*, in which Charles Grodin keeps the adult audience amused with his delicious portrayal of an uptight air-freshener salesman tormented by a smelly dog, this panders to the pre-teen audience. Grodin hovers in the wings while the dog falls in love and sires puppies. For young lovers of schmaltzy humour only. (S&S April 1994) □

A Dangerous Woman

Director Stephen Gyllenhaal; USA 1993; First Independent VA 20220; Certificate 18
Debra Winger cited this little seen oddity as the film of which she is proudest. Certainly, her rendering of a mentally handicapped young woman is a radical departure from her usual sassy roles, but there is little else of interest. Naomi Foner's script is sentimental, psychological hogwash posing as serious art, and the suggestion that the mentally ill suffer from little more than an attack of acute honesty is crass. (S&S June 1994)

Fearless

Director Peter Weir; USA 1993; Warner V012986; Certificate 15
Two survivors of an air crash, Max Klein (Jeff Bridges) and Carla Rodrigo (Rosie Perez), experience diametrical reactions after the event. Carla is racked with guilt over her son's death in the accident, whereas Max develops delusions of immortality. Economically scripted by Rafael Yglesias from his novel, this excellently played drama is superior fare benefiting from taut direction and handsome cinematography. (S&S May 1994) □

Gypsy

Director Emile Ardolino; USA 1994; EV EVV 1313; Certificate PG
A dry and ploddingly uncinematic adaptation of the stage musical about



No fear of flying: Jeff Bridges in 'Fearless'



Grandes dames: Joan Plowright, Natasha Richardson in 'Widows Peak'

the early career of a stripper and her overbearing mother. Even reliable Bette Midler fails to inject fun into the project as the film rambles from one hoofing step-piece to the next. (S&S October 1994)

Jurassic Park

Director Steven Spielberg; USA 1993; PolyGram VHA 1637; Certificate PG
Despite its literary origins (Michael Crichton's novel is tightly plotted and emotionally involving), Steven Spielberg's action-fantasy is little more than a big-budget monster movie laden with eye-catching special effects. While individual scenes work brilliantly (for example, the T-Rex chase is a masterpiece of suspense editing) and the pace rarely flags, this has none of the unified coherence of *Jaws*. (See also *Wind Up* this month). (S&S August 1993) □

M. Butterfly

Director David Cronenberg; USA 1993; Warner V012984; Certificate 15
A French diplomat in China marries an actress who is revealed as a man years later. Beaten to the post by the gender-reversal hit *The Crying Game*, Cronenberg's ill-considered screen version of David Henry Hwang's play comes unstuck on a number of fronts. The direction is uncharacteristically sombre and tiresome, Jeremy Irons is stilted, and John Lone looks like a man in drag, making his deception incomprehensible. (S&S May 1994)

The Pelican Brief

Director Alan J. Pakula; USA 1993; Warner V012989; Certificate 12
Nicknamed 'The Pelican Long', this graceless adaptation of John Grisham's novel veers between boring and mind-boggling. After two members of the supreme court are brutally murdered, an uppity law student (Julia Roberts) solves the case and finds herself pursued by the culprits. Denzel Washington lends weight, but even at over two hours this remains flimsy. (S&S March 1994)

Rookie of the Year

Director Daniel Stern; USA 1993; FoxVideo 8521; Certificate 12
A boy (Thomas Ian Nicholas) discovers he can pitch baseballs at 100mph and is signed up by the Chicago Cubs to revive their flagging career. Amiable kids' fare with few pretensions and plenty of heartwarming home-runs. (S&S June 1994) □

Striking Distance

Director Rowdy Herrington; USA 1993; 20.20 Vision NVT 18642; Certificate 18
Although the combination of action men Bruce Willis and Rowdy Herrington sounds tempting, this daft manhunt movie fails to deliver. A hard-nosed police officer (Willis) teams up with a feisty partner (Sarah Jessica Parker) to track a serial killer whom he believes killed his father. Sporadically entertaining nonsense. (S&S May 1994) □

Sugar Hill

Director Leon Ichaso; USA 1993; EV EVV 1291; Certificate 18
In the downtrodden Sugar Hill district of New York, life-long hood Roemello Skuggs (Wesley Snipes) is inspired by approaching middle-age and the charms of an alluring woman (Theresa Randle) to escape his criminal past and his neighbourhood. Ichaso's grim street fable centres on Snipes' solid, engaging performance. A hip soundtrack adds appeal. (S&S October 1994)

Tom & Viv

Director Brian Gilbert; UK 1994; EV EVV 1303; Certificate 15
Gilbert brings to this tale about the relationship between T.S. Eliot and his long-suffering wife Vivienne the same

workmanlike approach that characterised *Not Without My Daughter*. Crises are broached, breasts beaten and domestic traumas unravelled, resulting in accusations of factual inaccuracy from the Eliot estate. Miranda Richardson and Willem Dafoe give their best, but it remains baffling how this won a BAFTA for Best British Film. (S&S May 1994)

Widows Peak

Director John Irvin; UK 1993; Guild G8764; Certificate PG
Despite the awful potential – a 20s 'Oirish' setting, the director of *Turtle Diary*, a lead performance by Mia Farrow – *Widows Peak* is a whimsical surprise. Natasha Richardson is in glamorous form as a mysterious young widow who sends ripples of shock and outrage reverberating through a staid community, while Joan Plowright is dependable as the ageing matriarch presiding over the action. (S&S May 1994)

Rental premiere

Black Fox

Director Steven H. Stern; USA 1994; Reflective RE 7022; Certificate 15; 94 minutes; Producer Les Kimber; Screenplay John Binder; Lead Actors Christopher Reeve, Raoul Trujillo, Tony Todd
Impressive Tony Todd (*Candyman*) steals the show in this politically correct, made-for-television revisionist Western. While the Union army are away fighting the Civil War, a group of Texan women and children are kidnapped, leaving it up to heroic pioneer Todd (in spite of the racism he has suffered) to come to their rescue. Passable fare.

Blindfold: Acts of Obsession

Director Lawrence Simeone; USA 1994; PolyGram PG 1032; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Ronnie Hadar; Screenplay Lawrence Simeone; Lead Actors Shannen Doherty, Judd Nelson, Kristian Alfonso, Drew Snyder
On advice from their analyst a couple with marital shortcomings engage in odd-ball sexual antics. Murders ensue mimicking those attributed to a former patient of the psychiatrist. A silly erotic thriller plot and some bland sex scenes (with the usual wailing horn accompaniment) make this forgettable.

Deadly Deception

Director J. Anthony Loma; Spain/France 1991; Hi Fliers HFV 8278; Certificate 18; 93 minutes; Producer Carmen P. Pueyo; Screenplay J. Anthony Loma; Lead Actors Andrew Stevens, Claire Hoak, Lloyd Bochner, Anthony Easley
Dreadful erotic thriller, only worth watching for the moments of unintentional hilarity. A private detective overhears a murder being committed down the end of a phone. The dialogue includes such gems as "Was it a man or a woman?", "I don't know, it could be both." An unbearable combination of wooden performances, poor dubbing and overwhelming sleaziness.

Dead On

Director Ralph Hemecker; USA 1993; Odyssey ODY 417; Certificate 18; 88 minutes; Producer Stu Segall; Screenplay April Wayne; Lead Actors Matt McCoy, Shari Shattuck, David Akroyd, Tracy Scoggins

PRIVATE VIEW

Gillies MacKinnon on Kurosawa's 'Ikiru'

Haunting visions

I first saw Kurosawa's *Ikiru* at the Glasgow art school film society, sitting beside my pal Gerry McGowan who cracked loud jokes all the way through a succession of Bergman, Visconti and Pasolini films. I was just beginning to realise that movies were not only about action but also about stories which can get inside you and alter your way of thinking. I watched *Ikiru* again last winter during the dead of night, sheltering in a trailer on the outskirts of Atlanta, Georgia where I was directing Steve Martin's screenplay *A Simple Twist of Fate*. Outside, the special effects team struggled chaotically to construct a snow scene with gallons of freezing detergent. Inside the trailer, I was once again caught up in Kurosawa's simplicity of story-telling and the film's unselfconscious quality of acting.

Opening with the diffuse image of an x-ray plate, we immediately know that the theme of the film is death. Kanji Watanabe (played by Takashi Shimura), a senior clerk of the Citizens Section, has spent thirty heartless years at his desk. The narrator tells us that although he walks around, he is as good as dead. Meanwhile, groups of desperate women, who want to reclaim an area of wasteland to make a children's playground, are shuffled from department to department in a painfully true comic sequence which includes a pest control clerk idly swatting flies.

Watanabe visits the doctor. In the waiting room a patient foresees that the old man has cancer. Gripped by fear, Watanabe changes his seat and turns his face away from the man towards the camera, creating one of the most memorable, recurring images – his large, troubled, soulful face staring into space as events unfold around him. Film-makers often adopt other film-makers as teachers, and I know that this particular image was on my mind when I was staging scenes around the character John Healy in *The Grass Arena*.

As the doctors discuss Watanabe's case among themselves, one of them asks the central question of the drama – faced with six months to live, what would you do? Watanabe is shown walking alone, stunned. A mute soundtrack makes us feel as if we are inside his head and then, suddenly, the noise of traffic explodes and the camera pulls out to reveal the street as vehicles wipe through the frame and obscure him. This is one of the more elaborate set-ups in the film. For the most part, *Ikiru* leaves a dramatic visual impression because the photography complements the acting without unsettling the scene with tricky camera moves – the looks on faces, the postures, the movement of bodies around rooms and streets are the images that stay in the mind.

Kurosawa cuts hard into scenes to great effect. In a flashback sequence, Watanabe reviews the losses and failures of his life, ending with him slumping down into a chair – cut to him slumping down in real time in a continuous motion, then cut to an



Takashi Shimura as Watanabe, a man forced to face his life in 'Ikiru'

elevator descending, which has the effect of pulling the viewer down to Watanabe's state of mind.

Watanabe is unable to die because he doesn't know what he has been living for. With half his life savings in his pocket, he asks a drinking partner to show him how to have the good time he has never known. So follows a wild, manic night in recently westernised, neon-lit streets as this naive old man tries hard to live. This includes him buying a white hat which later becomes something of a running gag, prompting various reactions to the 'new' Watanabe. Tumbling from nightclub to nightclub, Watanabe's frenzied mood suddenly changes as he stuns the revellers into silence by singing – from some deep, sorrowful place inside himself – "Life is so short, fall in love dear maiden while your lips are still red for there will be no tomorrow." *Ikiru* is worth seeing for this scene alone.

In a later sequence he befriends a vivacious young woman, and there follows a hazardous shot where she excitedly runs into the street towards two oncoming buses. This is the only moment in the film where I feel separated from the action as suddenly you become aware of the camera operator who must have had his ears clipped by the buses.

Watanabe becomes obsessed with turning the dump into a children's playground. Combining super-human zeal with a show of humility (which makes the term passive-aggressive seem an understatement), he manages to overcome the inertia of county hall

petty bureaucracy and to ignore the threats of gangsters. He then dies, and the remainder of the film brilliantly follows events at his funeral. I love the way in which the characters become caught up in powerful emotional responses *en masse* – for example, the group of mourning women who pour into the room like wailing banshees and the previously cynical colleagues who collapse in a wave of repentance.

I have wondered how the story would be interpreted by Hollywood if it was remade with a first rate actor such as Jack Lemmon or Burt Lancaster. I suspect the complexity of the flashback structure would be the first thing to go. *Ikiru* is the story of a man trying to experience life in the few months he has left, and finding the answer in the creation of a children's playground. The sentimental pitfalls for any modern version are obvious (although, I suspect an earlier Hollywood movie of, let's say, the 50s might have been closer in spirit to Kurosawa). It's easy to knock Hollywood with its bright-eyed executives generating scrolls of notes, the formulaic plots and its obsession with previews which – with the cold-blooded influence of those who market movies – ask audiences if there is anything that they don't like. Even so, I can't help thinking that this might be one film that could survive a remake, but only if it could be told with the honesty and innocence of the original. The question is have we become too cynical to make this kind of simply-told human story? *'Ikiru'* is a Connoisseur Video release

A by-numbers, double-crossing thriller that blatantly steals from *Strangers on a Train*. An airline pilot (McCoy) and his lover (Shattuck) agree to murder one another's spouses. Tracy Scoggins (current pretender to the title of Rental Premiere queen) plays McCoy's smart-mouthed wife.

The Force

Director Mark Rosman; USA 1994; Reflective RE 7025; Certificate 15; 94 minutes; Producer Pierre David; Screenplay Steve Kallagher, Mitch Marcus, Randall Frakes; Lead Actors Jason Gedrick, Kim Delaney, Gary Hudson, Cyndi Pass

The spirit of a deceased hard-nosed cop lives on in the body of a young rookie. Although daft and derivative (plagiarising from *Ghost to the Hidden*), Rosman's thriller is carried by Gedrick's engaging performance and a few well-handled action scenes.

M.A.N.T.I.S

Director Eric Laneuville; USA 1994; Universal VHA 1770; Certificate PG; 84 minutes; Producer Steve Ecclesine; Screenplay Sam Hamm; Lead Actors Carl Lumbly, Bobby Hosea, Gina Torres, Steve James.

A passable, made-for-TV super-hero romp originally devised by Sam Raimi and, as a result, featuring plenty of nods toward *Darkman*. A businessman, crippled during a riot, creates a body armour which not only gives him mobility but turns him into an almost indestructible crime fighter.

Zero Tolerance

Director Joseph Merhi; USA 1994; New Age NA 001; Certificate 18; 85 minutes; Producers Joseph Merhi, Richard Pepin; Screenplay Jacobsen Hart; Lead Actors Robert Patrick, Mick Fleetwood, Titus Welliver, Kristen Meadows. A delightfully vicious revenge drama featuring senseless gun action and big explosions. FBI agent Jeff Douglas' family are brutally killed after he is called on to hunt down a Mexican drug dealer. Mad as hell, Douglas high-tails it to Las Vegas where he takes his revenge on the baddies. The talented Patrick brings credibility to an unbelievable role, and Merhi demonstrates his flair for wanton destruction.

Retail

Bound and Gagged: A Love Story

Director Daniel B. Appleby; USA 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1132; Price £15.99; Certificate 18 (S&S January 1994)

Buffet Froid

Director Bertrand Blier; France 1979; Art House AHO 6005; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18. Bertrand Blier and Gérard Depardieu followed up the success of *Les Valseuses* with this disappointing black comedy. Petty crook Alphonse (Depardieu) is accused by a police inspector (played by Blier's father Bernard Blier) of murder after his switchblade is found in the stomach of a métro commuter. (MFB No. 564)

Butterfield 8

Director Daniel Mann; USA 1960; MGM/UA S054937; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 15. Elizabeth Taylor won an Oscar for her

portrayal in this drama of a high-class call-girl who wishes to reform her life after meeting Mr Right (Laurence Harvey). (MFB No. 323)

The Cement Garden

Director Andrew Birkin; UK/Germany/France 1992; Tartan Video TVT 1173; Price £15.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18 (S&S November 1993)

Century

Director Stephen Poliakoff; UK 1993; Electric Video E-067; Price £15.99; Certificate 15 (S&S January 1994)

Chain of Desire

Director Temistocles Lopez; USA 1992; Mainline MPV 013; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 Lopez's second English language film resembles an erotic version of Max Ophüls' *La Ronde*. The lives of fourteen New Yorkers are linked by their sexual relationships with one another. The excellent acting (especially by Malcolm McDowell and Grace Zabriskie) is complemented by moody lighting but, unfortunately, Lopez's directorial style soon palls. (S&S September 1993)

Coming Out

Director Heiner Carow; East Germany 1990; Dangerous To Know DTK 017; Price £14.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15 A drab, gay awareness drama set against the background of the fall of the Berlin Wall. An East German teacher discovers his homosexuality one night in a bar and as a result suffers alienation in his work and social life. (MFB No. 687)

Cool It Carol

Director Peter Walker; UK 1970; Jezebel JEZ 002; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 Carol Thatcher (Janet Lyn) and her boyfriend Joe (Robin Askwith) leave their village for London where they encounter seediness and vice. An average sex comedy which tries to temper its frivolity with a social message. (MFB No. 444)

The Crazies

Director George A. Romero; USA 1973; Redemption RETN 043; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 Echoes of *Night of the Living Dead* abound in this average paranoia movie about a plane carrying a deadly virus which crashes in a small mid-West town. The attempt to provide an effective critique on militarism is heavy-handed and obvious with Romero better at maintaining a high body count than being profound. (MFB No. 530)

Cruel Passion

Director Chris Boger; UK 1977; Jezebel JEZ 004; Price £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18 In this rough adaptation of De Sade's novel *Justine*, Koo Stark stars as a young woman whose virtue is constantly under threat. (MFB No. 531)

Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story

Director Rob Cohen; USA 1993; Universal VHR 1636; Price £13.99; Certificate 15 (S&S September 1993) □

L'eclisse (The Eclipse)

Director Michelangelo Antonioni; Italy/France 1962; Art House AHC 7010; Price £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate 15 Antonioni's trilogy of alienation – which began with *L'avventura* and was followed

by *La notte* – is completed in this stylish but empty meditation on doomed love. Vittoria (Monica Vitti) leaves her older lover and starts an affair with self-centred stockbroker Piero (Alain Delon) who works for Rome's frenzied Borsa. (MFB No. 350)

Fire in the Sky

Director Robert Lieberman; USA 1993; Paramount VHR 2776; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S July 1993)

The Firm

Director Sydney Pollack; USA 1993; Paramount VHR 2819; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S October 1993) □

Free Willy

Director Simon Wincer; USA 1993; Warner S012965; Price £13.99; Certificate U (S&S March 1994) □

The Fugitive

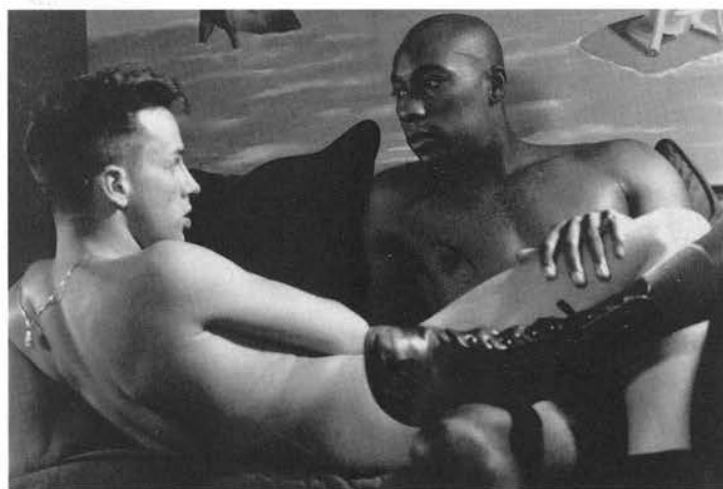
Director Andrew Davis; USA 1993; Warner S012408; Price £13.99; Certificate 15 (S&S October 1993) □

Germinal

Director Claude Berri; France/Belgium/Italy 1993; Guild G8774; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 15 Zola's novel of a miner's uprising during the Second Empire is brought vividly to the screen using expensive sets and with Gérard Depardieu pushing the narrative in the right direction. Depardieu stars as Maheu, a miner who gives shelter to a politically motivated co-worker (played by singer Renaud) who initiates a devastating strike at the mine. The story may have been told before, but rarely with such power or with such a convincing sense of verisimilitude. (S&S May 1993)

Grief

Director Richard Glatzer; USA 1993; Dangerous To Know DTK 021; Price £14.99; Certificate 18 A very enjoyable camp, comic drama about off-screen romantic shenanigans in a daytime soap production office which rival the outrageous on-screen goings on. An uneven piece of work, but the direction, acting (especially from Divine-esque drag artist Jackie Beat) and



Life's a soap: 'Grief'

script are first rate. This is how *Soap Dish* might have turned out if John Waters had directed it. (S&S April 1994)

Groundhog Day

Director Harold Ramis; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVR 24594; Price £12.99; Certificate PG (S&S May 1993)

Hard Target

Director John Woo; USA 1993; Universal VHR 1674; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 (S&S November 1993) □

Häxan

Director Benjamin Christensen; Sweden 1922; Redemption RETN 017; Price £12.99; B/W; Silent; Certificate 18 In this seven part study of demonology, the documentary footage and vivid, surreal ritual sequences justifiably give this controversial film its reputation. The factual sections – which include shots of torture implements and illustrations – make the staged sequences of orgies and satanic worship (with Christensen as the devil) seem all the more believable. This is not the version available in the States narrated by William Burroughs. Aka *Witchcraft Through the Ages*. (MFB No. 419)

Hitler, a Film from Germany (Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland)

Director Hans Jürgen Syberberg; West Germany 1977; Academy CAV 017; Price £34.99; Subtitles;



Lending his weight: Gérard Depardieu in 'Germinal'

Certificate 15

Remarkable seven hour exploration of the Hitler phenomenon in four parts – *The Grail*, *A German Dream*, *The End of the Winter's Tale* and *We, the Children of Hell* – which uses a bewildering array of reference points to convey its message. The rise of Nazism is explained against a backdrop of German history and culture, and with the suggestion that the movement's roots lie embedded in democracy. Living up to his reputation as an iconoclast, Syberberg has created a piece of work that is theatrical to the point of high artifice. A number of 'choruses' take the viewer through the German psyche, using various techniques such as back-projection, marionettes, photographs, home movies and newsreel. A film that is dense, wordy, provocative and infuriating in equal measure. (S&S September 1992)

Jurassic Park

Director Stephen Spielberg; USA 1993; Universal VHR 1637; Price £14.99; Certificate PG (S&S August 1993) □

Long Weekend

Director Colin Eggleston; Australia 1977; Art House AHP 5012; Price £15.99; Certificate 15 John Hargreaves and Briony Behets play a couple who try to patch up their differences during a weekend camping break. But marital disharmony is the least of their worries when nature begins to wreak revenge for their disregard for the environment. (MFB No. 558)

Mad Dog and Glory

Director John McNaughton; USA 1992; Universal VHR 1638; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S July 1993)

Martin

Director George A. Romero; USA 1976; Redemption RETN 042; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 Killings and sepia-toned flashbacks are the highlights of this variable Romero slasher. The eponymous hero is a vampire from Central Europe who takes up residence in Braddock, Pennsylvania in the body of a teenager. The blood-sucking is modernised with Martin using syringes and razor blades instead of fangs on his victims. (MFB No. 528)

The Miracle Worker

Director Arthur Penn; USA 1962; MGM/UA SO 50590; Price £10.99; B/W; Certificate PG Emotionally powerful classic in which

WIND UP

By Peter Dean

● Since the video release of *Akira*, the UK market for Japanese animation has exploded. Video labels are popping up faster than demons in an arcade game. First there was Manga, then Kiseki Films, Anime Projects, Western Connection, Anime UK Video Collection, Crusader Video, Animanima and now the Japanese electronics giant Pioneer is about to launch its own specially geared label. The UK is now the fastest growing world market for anime. If rumours of Virgin and Bandai sniffing around prove true, the current market value of £25 million could be doubled by this time next year. Each title is averaging sales of 15,000 copies, with *Akira* now on 80,000 and *Legend of the Overfiend* having sold 40,000. Anime UK's Helen McCarthy thinks that the potential is "terrifying." A recent anime fanzine convention in Japan attracted 250,000 attendees. McCarthy believes that when the UK labels start to sell beyond the male-dominated 'comics and consoles' market, sales will go through the roof.

● Wind Up's revelation that the BBFC is to introduce descriptions of programme content on video cassette sleeves has now been confirmed and is to be implemented in the New Year. The notes will indicate levels of violence, bad language and sex to match BBFC classifications. One wonders if there's enough space on the sleeve to contain the Board's complex rationale. How will *Reservoir Dogs* be described? "Banned from video for over a year because of violence which may or may not be deemed to be liable to deprave and corrupt." How long will it be before a video label does away with images on its sleeves altogether and just uses these texts as the main selling point?

● Redemption, the tacky horror label, are threatening to "go all the way with Ferman" over the non-rating for release of *Bare Behind Bars*, a sado-masochistic German/Brazilian women-in-prison drama reviewed in last month's retail column. The company could challenge the decision in the High Court if it proves necessary.

● At time of going to press the video of *Jurassic Park* is being kept under wraps in much the same way that Disney steadfastly refuse to let anyone see copies of their animated classics prior to release. The result is that we are unable to comment on the quality of sound or the screen ratio of this release in this month's rental column. An anti-piracy

policy prior to cinema release is understandable, but after the film has been available in every boot fair in the country you might have thought CIC Video would like to show reviewers how good/bad/indifferent these copies are in relation to the film print.

● After the 'Special Editions' in the Elite Collection (See S&S September 1994) that weren't very special, this month sees the release of a 'Special Director's Approved Edition' of Andrew Birkin's *The Cement Garden*. It transpires that there is no difference at all in the film's scenes, order or running time. "They're absolutely identical in that respect," says a spokesperson for distributor Tartan Video. "Andrew Birkin approves of this transfer, that's all." Thanks to negotiations carried out by the Director's Guild of America two years ago, American directors are now allowed to sit in on their films' transfer to video. Just think of the 'Special Editions' we could be seeing in the not-too-distant future.

● The worst kept secret in the trade right now is a campaign to boost the ailing rentals sector which could see video competing against BSkyB with adverts on prime time television. The story begins four years ago when the video industry suffered a humiliating stand down. Just a few weeks after its launch, a £10 million generic advertising campaign was abruptly cancelled. Since then, any pooling of resources has been resisted by the various competing studios. Until, that is, the entrance of 'Generic 2 - The Comeback'. Blockbuster Video, the UK's leading rental chain, has managed to get everyone around a table again to agree a scheme which will impose a levy on each pre-recorded rental video tape at duplication stage. The projected revenue pool (roughly £10 million per annum) will then be spent directly on making adverts to try and save the industry before it's completely swamped by satellite and cable.

● Christmas product is upon us already. Cheesiest title to date is a video collection from Human Aquarium Productions, which can turn your television set into a tank in which you can watch naked human 'fish' swimming to and fro to the sound of ambient music. Catering for all sexualities, the tapes are called *Boyyfish*, *Girlfish* and *Allfish*. "Surprise your guests by being the first to have human 'fish' performing in your living room," says a spokesperson. Er, no thanks.

Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke recreate their superb Broadway performances. Duke plays the blind, deaf and mute Helen Keller and Bancroft her tireless teacher. (MFB No. 343)

The More the Merrier

Director George Stevens; USA 1943; Columbia TriStar CVR 11767; Price £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG
Set during the housing and hotel shortage which Washington suffered in the Second World War, this stars Charles Coburn as an old curmudgeon trying to cope with the problem, as well as advising Joel McCrea and Jean Arthur on their love life. (MFB No. 115)

Mrs. Doubtfire

Director Chris Columbus; USA 1993; Fox Video 8588; Price £13.99; Certificate PG
A cross-dressing crowd pleaser in which voice-over artist Daniel Hillard (Robin Williams) loses his job, wife and children, and tries to hang on to the latter by disguising himself as a woman and becoming their nanny. Williams copes brilliantly considering the confines of the latex make-up effects and the schmaltzy storyline. A few snips of dialogue earned the film a PG certificate rather than the unpopular cinema rating of 12. (S&S February 1994)

National Lampoon's Loaded Weapon 1

Director Gene Quintano; USA 1993; Guild GLD 51612; Price £10.99; Certificate PG (S&S June 1993)

A Perfect World

Director Clint Eastwood; USA 1993; Warner S012990; Price £13.99; Certificate 15 (S&S February 1994)

The Premonition (Svart Lucia)

Director Rumle Hammerich; Sweden 1992; Mainline MPV 011; Price £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
Reality and fantasy merge in the mind of a Swedish student who has a crush on one of her teachers and believes that she can control his actions. The mix of voyeurism and violence suggests Hitchcock, but as the sinister events come to a head the result is closer to a sophisticated, beautifully composed slasher movie. (S&S June 1994)

Roujin Z (Rojin Z)

Director Hiroyuki Kitakubo; Japan 1991; Manga MANV 1051; Price £12.99; Certificate 15
Japanese socio-economic problems are touched on in this imaginative mix of social comment and shoot-'em-up anime. The government's 'Z' programme - a bed which attends to the needs of pensioners - is exposed for having less than honourable intentions. Based on a story by the creator of *Akira*, Otomo Katsuhiro. (S&S July 1994)

Sleepless in Seattle

Director Nora Ephron; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar CVR 29799; Price £12.99; Certificate PG (S&S October 1993) □

Raining Stones

Director Ken Loach; UK 1993; Channel Four Films VA 30408; Price £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S October 1993)

Street Knight

Director Albert Magnoli; USA 1993; Cannon SO 32117; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S Video October 1993)

Tina: What's Love Got to Do With It

Director Brian Gibson; USA 1993; Touchstone D320112; Price £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S October 1993) □

Virgin Machine (Die Jungfrauenmaschine)

Director Monika Treut; West Germany 1988; Dangerous To Know DTK 025; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18
After the cold, sharply-designed images of *Seduction: The Cruel Woman*, the warmth and humour of Treut's first solely directed feature is disarming. Dorothee Müller (Ina Blum) leaves behind her studies on romantic love and her tedious boyfriend in Germany for a loose exploration of female sexual mores and attitudes in San Francisco. (S&S July 1993)

Walker, Texas Ranger: One Riot, One Ranger

Director Virgil W. Vogel; USA 1993; Cannon S032151; Price £10.99; Certificate 15 (S&S Video November 1993)

Wrong Movement (Falsche Bewegung)

Director Wim Wenders; West Germany 1975; Connoisseur Video CR 161; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
A writer (Rudiger Vogler) encounters several oddball characters (including a mute juggler played by Nastassja Kinski) while on a bleak, symbolic journey through Germany. This is the second film in Wenders' road trilogy which includes *Alice in the Cities* and *Kings of the Road*. (MFB No. 522)

The Young Americans

Director Danny Cannon; USA 1993; Columbia TriStar; Price £12.99; Certificate 18 (S&S October 1993)

Premiere

I Love You

Director Marco Ferreri; France/Italy 1986; Art House AHO 6019; Price £15.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 18; 97 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Christopher Lambert, Eddy Mitchell, Flora Barillaro
From the director of *La Grand bouffe*, an odd black comedy about male objectification of women. Christopher Lambert falls in love with an electronic lip-shaped key ring which says "I love you" when he whistles. A good looking movie, but the message was better conveyed in Berlanga's *Life Size* (in which Michel Piccoli falls in love with a blow up doll) and with a lot more fun in Steve Martin's *The Man With Two Brains*.

The Phantom Carriage

Director Victor Sjöström; Sweden 1920; Redemption RETN 041; Price £12.99; B/W; Silent; Certificate 12; 90 minutes; Producer Charles Magnusson; Screenplay Unknown; Lead Actors Victor Sjöström, Hilda Borgström; Astrid Holm
Impressive early horror with particularly good (and pioneering) use made of multi-layered flashbacks and double-exposure techniques. A 'coachman of death' is replaced each year by the last person to die before New Year's Eve. The narrative is driven by an anti-drinking message, but the film's style and tinted sequences make it worth a look. Aka *Körkarlen*/Thy Soul Shall Bear Witness/*The Stroke of Midnight*/Clay/Phantom Chariot.



Japanese animation hits town: 'Akira' has sold 80,000 video copies

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Censorship

From Margaret Ford, BBFC

In his letter of protest about my review of *Censored* (S&S October) Tom Dewe Mathews rightly corrects me for the omission of the word "also" from the sentence "the history of censorship is also the history of censors", but he seems to have missed the substantive point I was making. Whatever he may have said in his introduction, Mathews failed in my view to locate the practice of censorship within the wider cultural climate and prevailing manners and mores of the day. In other words, despite a highly readable account of what they didn't allow you to see and why, Mathews gives only part of the story. The what is presented, but the why is limited mostly to the foibles of the individual chief censor of the time. This is the narrow model Mathews constructed for himself, not one I gave him.

In pursuing this line of thinking, Mathews falls a victim to at least one of the errors I attributed to him. For instance, he quotes "a member of the Board" as saying that the classification decision on *Platoon* was made because James Ferman "would not budge from a 15". This is a complete distortion of how that decision was made. Initially, the film was passed '18' after being viewed by a number of examiners. The distributing company appealed in the light of the 'M' rating given in Australia, which allowed teenagers access to the film. As is customary, the film was seen on appeal by one of the presidents of the BBFC, in this case Lord Birkett, along with other examiners. It was agreed that '15' was a possibility, but that before taking this step, there should be a test screening for 15- to 18-year-olds. We screened the film in advance to a group of teachers, and though doubt was expressed about whether young people would understand the film, it was agreed that it would not harm a young audience to test themselves against such material. In the event, the 100 or so young people who attended the test screening showed themselves perfectly capable of understanding the film and the reasons why the depiction of drugs, violence and bad language was necessary in this context. As a result of this screening, and further deliberation internally, the film was given a '15'.

All this information was available to Mathews, yet he chose to ignore the careful and considered approach we took to this controversial decision, preferring to pursue his line of one-man censorship. Incidentally, a full account of the processes by which this decision was reached, including examiners' comments, can be found as part of a case study of *Platoon* in *Classified! A Teachers' Guide to Film and Video Censorship and Classification* by Richard Falcon, a senior examiner at the BBFC, published by BFI Education.

Mathews also states in his letter that he had unlimited access to the chief censor's office – and, as a journalist, he complains about this! This makes it all the more perplexing that he got the facts wrong, *inter alia*, on *The Tin Drum*, *True Romance*, *The*

Immoral Mr Teas, erections in sex-education tapes, the time scale of the BBFC taking over the whole building at 3 Soho Square, and the ludicrous suggestion that the Home Office withdrew its support from Ian Trethowan as the new president of the BBFC in 1985 because examiners threatened a walk-out. Lastly, on a personal and more trivial note, Mathews asserts that I came to the BBFC from the National Film Archive. Sadly this is not true.

London W1

Video choice

From Michael O'Sullivan

Fellini's. Buñuels. Chabrols. The Bergman Collection. The Malle Collection. The Truffaut Collection. But where, pray, is the Antonioni Collection or the Visconti Collection in the international/foreign sections of our video emporiums? The NFT last did seasons on them in 1990 and though *Blow-Up* was revived last year and re-issued on video this year, what about the Italian titles, the famous trilogy? They have not even been on television for at least a decade.

As a person in my late 40s, I am part of that generation who saw these films on their original release, when London had plentiful first- and second-run outlets for foreign films. Video releases would now be appreciated and surely viable.

Portsmouth, Hants

Robin Holloway of *Connoisseur Video* replies Every month in the UK there are approximately 300 new video titles released, of which 'World Cinema' titles form an increasingly large (but still tiny) percentage. Each one of these 300 is fighting for space on a shelf in your local video store. Obviously, only a few will make it. Most video stores have access to a trade directory of available titles, and there is also at least one mail-order company which will track down titles: Video Plus Direct (0733 232800).

To release a title on video requires rights to be acquired, contracts to be negotiated, legal minefields to be navigated, and good-quality materials to be found. *Connoisseur Video* has already released Visconti's *Ossessione*, *Rocco and His Brothers* and *La terra trema* and we will be releasing Antonioni's *Identification of a Woman* in January 1995. Also available are *Death in Venice* (Warner Home Video), *L'Innocente* (Fabulous Films) and Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (MGM Home Video) and *L'eclisse* (Art House Productions).

Art school film

From Mark Bristow

I am writing about the complete neglect of student film-making in this country. I have just graduated from one of the few film and video degrees, at the West Surrey College of Art and Design. For our annual show (held in London so people from the 'industry' would not have far to travel), no one responded to our invitations, including various film magazines. Why is it that the term 'student film' is considered an insult – rather like 'British film'? Though British film-makers such as Ridley Scott, Derek Jarman, Sally Potter, Ken Russell and Peter Greenaway are held in high esteem by this magazine for their art-school backgrounds and desire to experiment with, challenge and subvert the medium of film, there seems little inclination to help others to do

the same. Fashion and fine arts students are treated seriously, with sponsored shows of the best graduate work. So why not film students? Is it not possible that a London show put on at great expense and effort by students be treated as a festival and reviewed? *High Wycombe, Bucks*

American anxieties

From Mariko Saito

I enjoyed the article by José Arroyo on *True Lies* (S&S September), and I too think this film could be a landmark which changes Schwarzenegger's image from dehumanised robot to American hero. But I would like to add my interpretation of the representation of race in this film, which gives us a clue to understanding what threatens American people.

Most Hollywood action films have a 'good guy', played by a famous star, and 'bad guys', his enemies. So far, the roles of enemies have been given to Native Americans and communists. But today, since neither of these groups any longer poses a great threat to the lives of Americans, it is an Arab who is depicted as the enemy. Though the Gulf War victory may have lessened American fear of Arabs, a race strongly opposed to the hegemony of the United States may still cause a massive anxiety. So in *True Lies*, the hero Harry achieves the American Dream by expelling a common fear and realising a peaceful world.

But there is another race depicted in the film. Most of the audience may have noticed the similarity of beginning and ending. But at the end, Harry, escorting his wife, greets some Japanese, rather than Arabs as at the beginning. Are we to presume that Harry's next feat of espionage, which would start at this party, might involve the Japanese, perhaps one of the big Japanese companies which threaten the US economy?

Chronicle of cinema

From David A. Vincent

The 'Chronicle of Cinema' supplements celebrating 100 years of cinema are a very informative guide. But I was somewhat horrified to discover that the birth of that truly great actor Michael Caine had not been listed. Then I found out that you had him born in 1934, when in fact he was born in 1933. Anyone who has forked out a few pounds for his outstanding autobiography, *What's It All About?*, would be able to point out this little blunder.

Mansfield, Notts

Editor's note S&S will publish a selection of letters on 'The Chronicle of Cinema' with the January issue

Additions and corrections

October 1994 p.13 (caption): "big-time heroin smuggler" should be omitted; pp.22-25: Charlie Sieber should read Al Sieber; pp.37-38: The correct running times for *Clear and Present Danger* and *Color of Night* are 141 minutes and 123 minutes; p.45 In the review of *Huozhe (To Live)*, the production company should read: Century Communications Ltd for ERA International (Hong Kong) Ltd, in association with Shanghai Film Studios.

November 1993 p.55: In the review of *Trois Couleurs: Bleu (Three Colours: Blue)*, the correct name of the stripper is Lucille; Sandrine is the mistress of Patrice.

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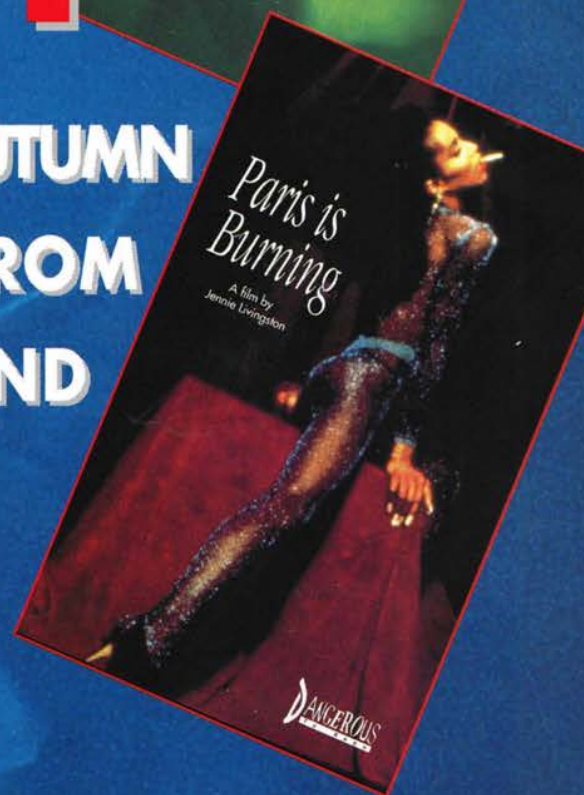
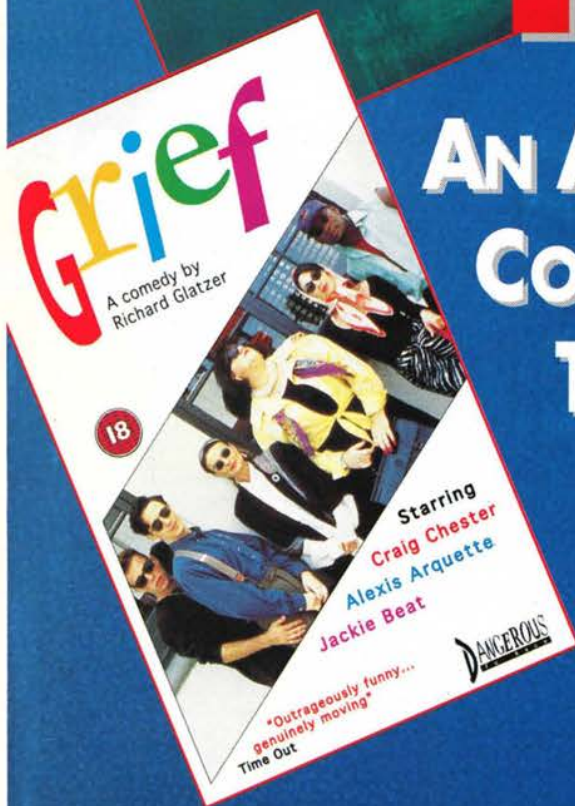
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